Irving Howe Anoints a Classic • Malcolm Cowley Reads Fitzgerald's Mail

Von Hoffman's History of Third Parties • Leslie Gelb Nixes the MX

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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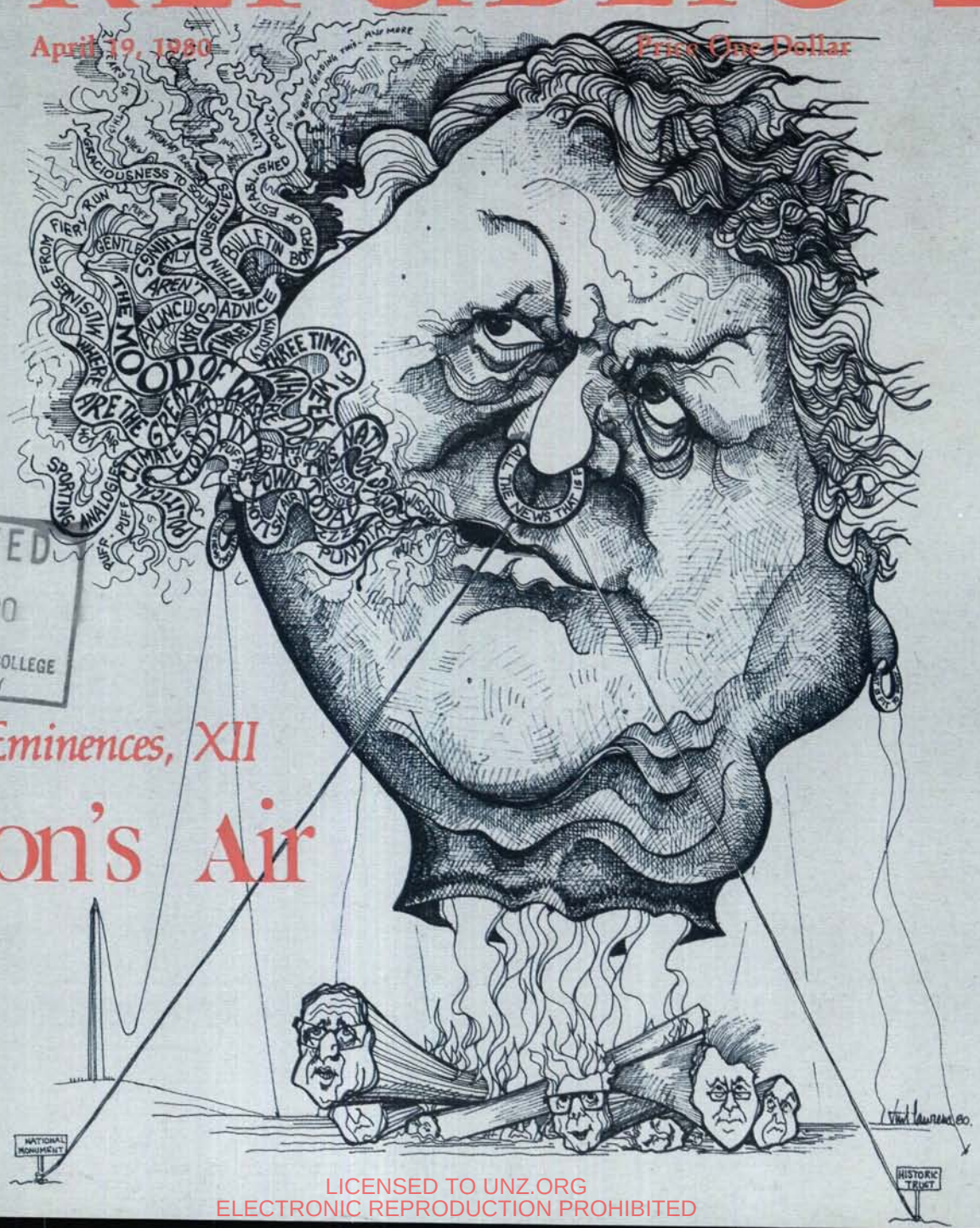

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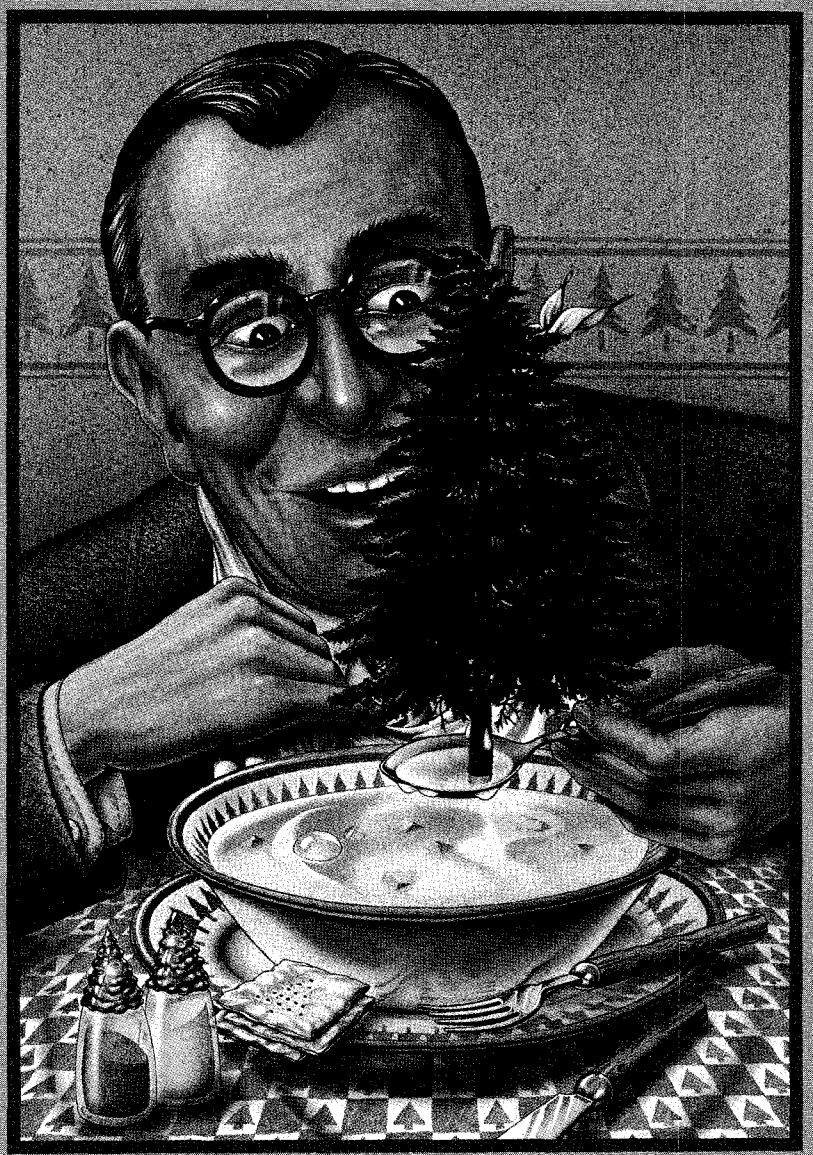

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TRB

from Washington ®
April 19, 1980

Hallowed Mediocrity

Back during the presidential primaries of 1920 Bruce Bliven set out to interview all the candidates of both major parties. He told about one conversation in his autobiography, *Five Million Words Later* (John Day): "Of the interviews, I remember most vividly the one with Senator Harding who assured me that 'What the country needs is a tariff policy that will aid the struggling industries of Europe.' I was so surprised that I asked him to repeat it, to make sure that I had not misunderstood him. I hadn't."

Sixty years later reporters are interviewing Ronald Reagan, and asking him to repeat what he has said, and then coming away rubbing their eyes. *Time* magazine reported last week that Reagan declared Americans can have "cheap gasoline again by lifting government restrictions" on the oil industry, then offered the astonished editorial comment, "not even the oil industry would buy that."

Time is gentle about it: "Quite apart from the substantive merits of his views, Reagan consistently documents them by misusing and misstating facts—a fact that disturbs many of those in his entourage." "Disturbs" is certainly mild enough. The fact that Harding didn't know anything about the tariff 60 years ago didn't seem to bother people much, nor prevent his election, and the evidence that Reagan doesn't know much about energy or inflation very likely won't prevent his election either.

It's not just one reporter who brings back Reagan gaffes. Elizabeth Drew gives a similar account in *The New Yorker* (March 24) after traveling with him. One romantic flight of his imagination was about the Kemp-Roth tax cut proposals: he is going to boost arms expenditures, he promises, cut income taxes 30 percent, and end inflation altogether. When the astonished journalist asks him to repeat the proposal he wonders out loud whether they know that President Kennedy also cut taxes 30 percent in 1964, and that instead of producing inflation it balanced the budget?

The answer to this is that Reagan has dangerously oversimplified the thing; Kennedy got an 18 percent tax cut (not 30 percent). But inflation at that time was a minuscule 1.2 percent a year, not today's roaring 20 percent. It is like saying you can cross the ocean safely in a rowboat because somebody else did it on the *Queen Mary*.

This is demagoguery. Reagan does it with a nice smile and twinkly eyes, and I guess he believes what he says when he says it, since a good actor believes his lines; but telling audiences that he can solve America's brutal problems by easy, comfortable solutions is demagoguery. It recalls the classic study by James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (1888), with its famous chapter, "Why Great Men Are Not Chosen President." Something to mull over as we contemplate the choice between Carter and Reagan. To be sure, America in 200 years has had its great presidents; 75 scholars balloting in 1962 said we had had five "greats" up to then—Lincoln, Washington, FDR, Wilson, and Jefferson in that order. I think few people would say we have had any Lincolns since 1962. The ore of American presidential greatness, alas, doesn't assay very high.

Bryce discussed the reasons: "The ordinary American voter does not object to mediocrity. . . . He likes his candidate to be sensible, vigorous and above all, what he calls 'magnetic,' and does not value, because he sees no need for, originality or profundity, a fine culture or a wide knowledge."

American political parties, observed this British ambassador, looked for safe candidates rather than brilliant ones. What makes a good candidate is not necessarily what makes a good president. Bryce wrote a century ago:

"Who now knows or cares to know anything about the personality of James K. Polk or Franklin Pierce? The only thing remarkable about them is that being so commonplace they should have climbed so high."

There also have been institutional changes that have promoted the "Carter-Reagan syndrome," like the new direct primary system. Here we are, not halfway through the tedious 37 primaries, and we are practically certain of the nominees. Delegates are picked and legally pledged. In the bad old days there was more flexibility and suspense; yes, the political bosses sometimes selected hacks like Harding in smoke-filled rooms, but they also performed a screening function; they were elite party leaders and normally the candidate was an insider too. The leaders who approved him were then willing to follow him and mobilize Congress for him if he won. Congressional Democrats give precious little support to Carter today. Discouraged voters ask if their system works anymore. Political parties have all but collapsed. "The United States has become a nation in danger of being unable or unwilling to govern itself," says Haynes Johnson in his book, *In the Absence of Power* (Viking). It is hard to recall such a period of alienation and dissatisfied self-examination.

Comes now a great, brawling, muckraking scold of a book by Ferdinand Lundberg called *Cracks in The Constitution* (Lyle Stuart) that deals with some of our political problems and tries to show how we got into our current fix. It muckrakes the founding fathers and the hallowed Constitution; it shies pebbles at the august Supreme Court and wipes its boots on the sanctified doctrine of separation of powers. Lundberg, who wrote *The Rich And The Super-Rich*, is hardly a calm or unprejudiced source: he is cantankerous, irresponsible, and often infuriating. The point he is making, however, is important. He argues that in all democratic nations the people, by definition, make the final choice among the parties' *nominees* for national leadership. But only in the United States do the people also make the *nominations*. In England, the voters vote for the respective parties and the latter pick the rival leaders—prime minister or opposition head. But in the United States the voters vote directly for Carter or Reagan. The British election takes two months; the American, two years.

Can we change our system? To a limited degree, yes; the Electoral College, for example, is now only a ghost. But an extensive overhaul through a new Constitutional Convention? That's generally considered too risky (Lundberg dissents). So, Lundberg argues, president, Congress, and Supreme Court constantly "bend" the Constitution without much popular control. This system has risks, too, however; remember Nixon?

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

April 19, 1980

Corporations and People

One of those ritual propaganda exchanges that pass for public debate on political issues is scheduled for Thursday, April 17. The topic is the role of large corporations in American life. A coalition of consumer groups, progressive unions, and figures on the left, including Ralph Nader, have decreed that date to be "Big Business Day." Unlike "Earth Day" and "Sun Day," organized by similar coalitions, the purpose of the festivities is to expunge a demon rather than to honor a saint. The Chamber of Commerce counteroffensive has labeled the occasion "Anti-Business Day." Meanwhile a rival coalition of conservative foundations, groups, and individuals has declared that April 17 actually is "Growth Day," and intends to spend it celebrating "the contributions of the American free enterprise system to man's prosperity, democracy and freedom under law."

The naive critical viewpoint about big business is amply illustrated in the materials promoting Big Business Day: large corporations are inhuman hydra-headed monsters, roaming the countryside out of control, ravaging the landscape and the populace to satisfy their all-consuming lust for profits. There is also a sophisticated critical view about the modern large corporation, more or less definitively articulated by John Kenneth Galbraith. This holds that the proliferation of stockholders has divorced control from ownership; general prosperity, modern promotional techniques, and the absence of competition have made it possible to create demand and set prices for the corporation's products; the complexity and technical sophistication of the corporation's task have created a bureaucracy of experts (Galbraith calls them the "technostructure") who hold the real power. As a result, large corporations often pursue goals that are not shared by either their owners or society as a whole.

The naive pro-corporate viewpoint, promoted by the Chamber of Commerce, holds that free enterprise has been a wonderful success; that large companies are just like small ones, only bigger; and how can more of a good thing be bad? This view emphasizes the value of competition, and alleges an intimate connection between personal freedoms and freedom in business life. Corporate image-peddlers hold (and perhaps even believe), in addition, that large corporations are deeply, even exclusively, concerned about the general welfare, the environment, culture, *people*. ("At ITT, we think the best ideas are the ideas that help people." "We're the people of United Technologies." "General Motors: people building transportation to serve people." Et cetera.)

There is no sophisticated sympathetic view of the large corporation. But there is a sophisticated defense of big business, articulated by neoconservative intellectuals like Irving Kristol, which concentrates not on the corporation but on its critics. These critics, it is held, do not value the achievements of modern capitalism because they themselves are sated with prosperity; because they have a cultural contempt for commerce; and because they regard the mass desires that capitalism satisfies so prodigiously as merely vulgar. In order to impose their own values, these liberal intellectuals (Kristol calls them the "new class") wish to see power concentrated in the government rather than diffused in private hands.

There is some truth in all these attitudes about corporations, and also much nonsense. In resisting the barrages of April 17, here are a few propositions to keep in mind.

First, profits are mostly good, not bad. That is, they are good if you believe that, on the whole, capitalism is the superior economic system. We believe the evidence tends to support this view. Neoconservatives correctly accuse liberals of great confusion and hypocrisy about this. To accuse large corporations in general of "profiteering" or "putting profits before people" is to miss the point: greed is *supposed* to be the dominant motivation in the capitalist system. Those who find this intolerable should be prepared to give up the system's fruits and explain away its accomplishments. The

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profits of large corporations do not disappear down the corporate maw or line the pockets of the rich; they generally benefit people of modest means who have shares of stock, insurance policies, and pension rights. As Galbraith has shown, one danger of the modern large corporation is that is has unchained itself from the discipline of profit maximizing, and is free to exert power toward less wholesome goals.

Second, the existence of large corporations is mostly good, not bad. In any event, it is inevitable. Capitalism's accomplishments, which we salute, would not be possible if tiny, competitive firms predominated in life the way they predominate in economic theory and the literature of the US Chamber of Commerce. Economies of scale in production and distribution, the need for planning, the demands of international competition all make large size essential. It is as silly for critics to wish that large corporations didn't exist as it is for defenders to pretend that they don't.

Third, large corporations do pose problems for society that the small business firms of hoary tradition do not. They do significantly reduce free-market competition, on which the whole mechanism of capitalism is thought to depend. They do often gain unhealthy political power. They do spawn huge bureaucracies, just like the government's, that frustrate commerce, smother creativity, and even—dare we suggest it?—reduce freedom. Neoconservatives, so quick to see this effect of huge size in the government, are blind to it in "private" corporate life. Recently this journal, in order to sell a single magazine subscription to CBS News, was asked to fill out a form and also:

> 1. Please submit a photocopy of your document of incorporation showing both corporate name and seal of state of incorporation.
> 2. Please submit a photocopy of United States Department of Treasury Form #5372 (Notice of New Employer Identification Number Assigned), showing both business name and federal identification number assigned to your business.
> 3. Bank reference including name and address of bank which has account in exact same name that check is to be made payable to.
> 4. Please list your social security number.

Fourth, the corporation is a device created by the government. It has no moral life of its own, good or bad. The government decrees its existence because this is thought to serve the general welfare. The government is perfectly entitled to adjust the terms of that existence to make sure the general welfare is served. The law of corporations permits investors to pool their resources with liability limited to their original investments; and it treats the resulting entity as a "person." The purpose is to make it easier to amass capital and productively exploit it. Clearly, society as a whole has prospered by this dispensation. But whatever "freedom" corporations are granted may be measured in strictly utilitarian terms. Freedom to issue stock is not the same as freedom of speech. Corporations may be "persons," but they are not people.

It's amazing how big business and its defenders share the anthropomorphic fallacy with their most naive critics. Executives go to great trouble and expense to portray their institutions as possessing the most admirable human virtues, while critics tar them with the ugliest human vices. Even Irving Kristol urges giant corporations to start acting more like responsible citizens: forgoing excess profits, politically activating shareholders, and somehow duplicating on the national level the old-fashioned relationship between the prominent local businessman and his town. The April 14 *Time* magazine celebrates the public-spiritedness of America's leading corporate executives in precisely these terms, beginning with Irving Shapiro of Du Pont, who

> says, 'I've always wanted to be sure that I didn't take more from the system than I was putting back.' There is Shapiro's friend Reg Jones, a British-born intellectual who has been similarly motivated to repay the society in which he climbed to become chairman of General Electric. And Citicorp's Walter Wriston, imbued with public commitment by his father, a university president who was also a high Government advisor. And AT&T's former Chairman John deButts, the courtly North Carolinian, who cherishes the Southern tradition of public service.

Inspiring? Not hardly, in part because it's baloney, but mainly because it isn't even good baloney. Who cares whether corporations and their executives are public-spirited? What we should want from big corporations is that they do as well as possible what they do best—the reason they exist—which is to create wealth. We shouldn't expect them to be concerned about how that wealth is distributed, or the condition of the environment, or how high the flag is flying: that's the government's job. And we're not impressed that top executives are willing to spend their stockholders' money funding the ballet and public television. The unexpressed message seems to be that anyone who cares so much about the arts can be trusted not to pollute the air. But large corporations don't really care about the arts *or* the air. And that's just fine, as long as they leave the arts alone, and they don't get huffy when the government keeps an eye on what they're doing to the air.

The law, in short, must determine the acceptable standards of corporate behavior. In many ways, our laws still reflect the outmoded, Chamber of Commerce image of corporations, and not the modern reality. The quaintest example is the fact that basic corporate law is still in the hands of the 50 states. About half the *Fortune* 500 are incorporated in Delaware. This includes Exxon, the largest corporation in America, with annual revenues 160 times those of the government that issued its charter. National and multinational corporations can shop around for the law they like the best. Charters are a largely symbolic matter, but

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Correspondence

Friedman and the free market

To the editors:

We at the *Stanford Libertarian* commend Kenneth Arrow for his insightful observation that Milton Friedman's program for social and economic change lacks guiding principles (Review of *Free to Choose*, *TNR*, March 22). That is what libertarians have been saying about him all along, and that is one of the reasons that we lumped him with the other neoclassical economists who make no distinction between the voluntary actions of the market and the coercive actions of government.

To Friedman the concept of individual rights is to be retained only to the extent that it is useful in producing incentives to work and save, in preserving familiar institutions such as the family, and in maintaining the fabric of society. It is abandoned whenever a free-market solution takes more than a few moments to visualize, or whenever its implied consequences are deemed too radical for today's society to consider. The libertarian, by contrast, holds firmly that people are to be treated solely as ends unto themselves, never to have their lives or property stolen for use as means to the ends of others. Aside from strict totalitarianism, this is the *only* consistent platform for judging the rightness or wrongness of human action, economic or otherwise, that we know of. If Arrow has another set of principles in mind, he's keeping it a well-guarded secret.

Scott M. Olmsted
Editor, The Stanford Libertarian
Palo Alto, California

To the editors:

In criticizing Milton Friedman's negative view of the "'new class' of bureaucrats, academics, and journalists," Kenneth Arrow says: "They are indeed paid above the average, and their advocacy of egalitarianism at their own expense can only be ascribed to self-interest by the most tortured reasoning."

Is Arrow supposing that this "new class," assuming it exists, must be motivated only by *monetary* considerations? Why couldn't the self-interest of this group, or of any single individual, be expressed as a desire for power and prestige, rather than larger incomes? (This, incidentally, would make Irving Kristol's "tortured reasoning" unnecessary.) Egalitarianism in income is in principle and in practice compatible with inequalities in power to dictate social change. Why couldn't someone be motivated to accept fewer dollars in return for the power to say who got those dollars?

Friedman and Kristol may not be correct about the "new class," but Arrow's argument against them on this point embodies an excessively "monetarist" view of human motivation.

Thomas A. Long
Cincinnati, Ohio

Inflation and recession

To the editors:

President Carter says he is satisfied with his anti-inflation program even though the cost of living has gone up from an annual rate of five percent when he took office to the present 18 percent. His plan is to slow down price increases by curbing demand and creating a recession. It may take quite a recession to bring this about. Consumer prices rose during the recession of 1967, again during the recession of 1969, and during the severe recession from November 1973 to March 1975.

Given the state of the economy today, a recession could easily slide into a serious depression. If this happens it will take more than fine tuning to save our economy from chaos. The president should remember that despite a tremendous effort to stop the price decline and to get the economy moving again, we did not really recover from the Great Depression of the 1930s until World War II pulled us out. Is it possible that history is about to repeat itself?

John C. Davis
Former Chief Economist
President'sCouncil of Economic Advisors
New Port Richey, Florida

Half-gent poet

To the editors:

In his review of Ted Morgan's biography of W. Somerset Maugham (*TNR*, March 8), Paul Fussell refers to "gents like T. S. Eliot and half-gents like W. H. Auden." I wonder if Mr. Fussell might explain what he means by calling Auden a "half-gent." If he is by chance referring to the poet's homosexuality, then his joke is a poor one and he owes his homosexual readers—many gentlemen among them—an apology. If he had something else in mind by the term "half-gent," what might it be? The poet I knew was every inch a gentlemen, so what has Mr. Fussell in mind?

Martin Greif
The Main Street Press
Clinton, New Jersey

Ominous circles of anti-Semitism

To the editors:

In tracing the modes of anti-Semitism, Rabbi Berkowitz (Correspondence, *TNR*, March 22) overlooks at least one category.

My animus took sudden root in the experience of being a minority among Jews, of the chill exclusion and disdained semi-visibility Jews have endured of anti-Semitism.

I conjecture an analogous response by Palestinians driven from patrimonial farms in the path of colonization. Experience is an unrivaled teacher. But these are ominous circles of instruction.

Bruce Marshall
Palo Alto, California

TNR makes me mad

To the editors:

In your March 29 issue your editorial ("Inflation, 3; Carter, 0") was followed several pages later by Anne Colamosca's essay explaining why a new federal program is needed to insure that rich ladies have properly trained maids. I subscribe to two journals of opinion. *National Review* makes me think. *The New Republic* makes me mad. This week your influence wins me. I am in a rage.

John Lewinski
Pullman, Washington

Back to the caucuses

To the editors:

Your March 8 issue featured trenchant criticisms of the presidential nomination process by TRB ("The Kings Are Dead") and Morton Kondracke (Politics: "Dismal Choices"). Clearly the system is extravagantly wasteful of time, energy, and money, as well as biased in favor of incumbent presidents and the unemployed. While TRB uses the occasion to give a plug for a constitutional study commission, I would like to point out that there is no mention in the Constitution of our primary/convention method of nominating presidential candidates. This system could be altered by legislation at any time.

(continued on page 38)

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megacorporations can play states and even nations off against one another on taxes, direct financial assistance, labor rules, environmental standards, worker health and safety, and so on. Government is effective only because it is a monopoly. It cannot govern effectively when it must compete for sovereignty with other governments. This is a tricky problem when dealing with multinationals, but at the very least the United States should assert its sovereignty over corporations within its own borders. This means a national corporate chartering law, and national standards for all major rules affecting corporations.

Federal chartering is one of the items in a proposed "Corporate Democracy Act," the official wish list of the people behind Big Business Day. The act contains other sensible ideas, such as limits on interlocking directorates, and forcing corporations to take some responsibility for the effects of plant closings. Other parts of the act are less enticing. It proposes that the boards of directors of large corporations be divvied up among various "constituencies," including the employees, consumers, the community, the environment, and (ah yes, almost forgot) the shareholders. It would give employees due process rights before they could be fired (allegedly to protect whistle-blowers). And it would be "self-enforcing" by means of lawsuits, for which the plaintiffs' lawyers could recover their fees from the corporation. Does this look familiar at all? It looks like the federal government at its least glorious: paralyzed by interest-group infighting, by an entrenched and invulnerable civil service bureaucracy, and by lawsuits at every turn. It is a public interest lawyer's dream, but a nightmare to anyone else.

The largest corporations are indeed public institutions, and presently not controlled by anyone, least of all their owners. Galbraith has proposed that the government buy them from these owners and run them at arm's length, protecting both the public interest and the capitalist magic. Others have pointed out that workers, consumers, and so on already own these corporations, more or less, through pension funds and insurance trusts, and it only requires a bit of legal untangling for them to assert control. Neither of these experiments would kill the goose, however much she might squawk. But she should be treated with some respect because, with all her faults, she really does lay golden eggs.

Politics

While Democrats Sleep

If you are a Democrat, your party's prospects for 1980 look pretty good, at least on the surface. Your presidential candidate won't be another FDR, but the Republicans just may do you another of their once-a-decade favors, nominating Ronald Reagan for the role formerly played by Herbert Hoover, Tom Dewey, Barry Goldwater, and Richard Nixon. Since coattails don't exist any longer, Democratic control of Congress seems safe again, regardless of what happens in the presidential race. The Senate right now is 58-41 Democratic; and while there had been some early concern that Republicans might take control, even GOP national chairman Bill Brock now concedes that the best his party can do is gain four or five seats this year. Brock thinks Republicans can pick up as many as 25 or 30 House seats, but the high-side estimate still would leave the Democrats in control by a margin of 246-189. Democrats currently control 31 of the 50 governorships and 69 out of 98 partisan state legislative chambers. And finally, while national opinion polling shows a general decline in party loyalty, the Democratic party's lead over the Republicans among the electorate is still 43-22, a wider spread than in the 1950s.

But any Democrat tempted to be complacent should look more closely at what's been happening lately at the state level. The Republicans are still far short of their high mark of 31 governors, reached in the 1968 election, but they are coming back. Richard Nixon paid little attention to Republican affairs at the state level; his Republican national chairmen, Rogers Morton, Bob Dole, and George Bush served him instead of concentrating on party-building. In the years after 1968, Republican control of statehouses gradually dwindled down to 19 despite Nixon's big 1972 victory, and sank even lower in 1974 and 1976, bottoming out at 12. But a reversal occurred in 1978, and now the Republicans have 19 governorships. This year there are 13 governor's races, 10 of them in states where the incumbent is a Democrat. If the Republicans can hold their three governor's chairs and pick up seven of the Democrats' 10, they will control a majority of the statehouses.

While no one at the national level has been noticing—except the Republican National Committee—the Republicans also have been making big gains in the state legislatures. The GOP suffered a net loss of 692 state legislative seats in 1974 and won back just two seats in 1976. Since then they have gained back 357 seats. Of the nation's 98 partisan state legislative chambers (Nebraska has a unicameral, nonpartisan legislature), the Democrats now control 67 and the Republicans 30, with one tied. But in 1976 the Republicans controlled only 16. In 1980, the Republican party has targeted 96 selected legislative seats around the country. If they win them and hold the seats they now have, the Republicans will be able to achieve majorities in 20 more legislative bodies and control more than half the nation's partisan legislative chambers.

Who cares? Well, Democrats should. 1980 is a census year, and 1981 will be the year that state legislatures and governors begin wrangling about reapportionment of congressional districts. In a state where one party

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controls both legislative chambers and the governorships, congressional districts are almost sure to be gerrymandered. Holding both legislative chambers or one chamber and the governorship gives a party strong control over the reapportionment process. Holding one chamber or the governorship leaves a party at least protected and able to fight against gerrymandering. Republican chairman Brock contends that inattention to state-level party-building in the Nixon days and the resulting lack of "protection" for the GOP in the early 1970s allowed Democrat-controlled legislatures to gerrymander Republicans out of 43 seats in the US House. Every election, he says, the Republicans get 10 percent fewer House seats than they win of the popular vote cast nationally for congressional candidates. If districts were drawn fairly, he claims, the GOP would get this 10 percent in Congress—or 43 seats. He doesn't say it, but Republican gerrymandering could net even more seats for the GOP.

Brock's aim is to make sure the Republicans are "protected" in 40 states, instead of the 23 where they now have just one-third control (at least one of the two legislative chambers, or the governorship), and to establish two-thirds control in 30 states instead of the 17 where they have it now. "This could mean 25, 30, or 35 seats in the House in the 1982 election," he says, "and that should be enough for a Republican majority."

The Republicans probably can't take control of Congress in this year's election, but they just might be able to do it two years from now. They could halve Democratic control of both Houses this time, and finish the job next time, helped along by reapportionment.

The Democrats ought to be worried. Name an area of political effort—money, manpower, propaganda, candidate recruitment, polling, research, computerization, television, technical assistance to campaigns—and the Republicans are outstripping the Democrats in every one. Under Chairman John White, the Democratic National Committee has been used much as the RNC was under Nixon—to serve the White House and the president's reelection campaign.

The Republican party is always richer than the Democratic, but the Democrats usually can narrow the gap when they have one of their own in the White House. That hasn't happened with Carter, who has involved himself in only five national party fundraising events since coming to office. In 1976, the last pre-Carter year at the DNC, chairman Robert Strauss and his aides raised $7.5 million. This year's budget is $4.2 million, and the first priority for spending will be to help the president get reelected in November. Even now, the committee is reluctant to get into fundraising in any major way because it does not want to tap funds that might otherwise go to the party's presidential contenders. By contrast, the Republican National Committee's budget for this year is $20.8 million. Federal law limits party presidential campaign expenditures to $4.5 million, so the rest can be used to build and promote the party by other means. The RNC staff consists of 300 persons, compared to 59 at the DNC. The RNC has 14 regional political directors working around the country; the DNC once had four, but they all have gone to work for the Carter-Mondale campaign, as has the Washington political director.

Not surprisingly, a major focus of RNC activity is the 1980 state legislative races. The RNC's local elections division has a staff of 30 people and a 1980 budget of $2.7 million. Its director, David Demarest, has available to him a computerized databank on past political performance in every election precinct and legislative district in the country, which helps his division target areas where money and manpower would be most useful. In promising districts, the Republicans conduct opinion surveys to help local party members recruit desirable candidates and to help candidates focus on popular issues. The RNC also provides training and technical advice to candidates. It uses videotape machines to help them learn how to make speeches, shows them how to compile a campaign plan, devise an advertising strategy, and raise money. It also will make sure that promising candidates come to the attention of corporate and issue-oriented PACs, and it has $1.4 million available for direct aid to state legislative candidates. A separate funding group, GOPAC, has been organized to collect and dispense another one million dollars to local Republican candidates. By comparison, a Democratic counterpart, DEMPAC, is still in the organizational phase, and there is squabbling among Democratic state officials, the White House, and the DNC about how to raise and dispense the money.

The DNC's communications director, Robert Neuman, is in charge of monitoring state campaigns. He has just two assistants, and as yet, no budget; he is also responsible for writing Chairman White's speeches and answering press inquiries about all other phases of Democratic party activities. The DNC is planning to hold seven seminars around the country this year to teach state, local, and congressional candidates and their managers how to run campaigns. The RNC is holding 100 just for state legislative candidates.

On top of all this, the Republicans are spending five million dollars on a national media campaign designed to appeal to 50 million voters who (an expensive national survey has shown) are under 40, have never voted, hold blue-collar or clerical jobs, have no college degree, average $15,000 a year in income, and feel strapped because of inflation. The opinion survey, conducted by Robert Teeter of Market Opinion Research in Ann Arbor, Michigan, indicates that this group is aware that the Democratic party has been in power for the last generation and holds the Democrats responsible for inflation. GOP ads feature working people talking about inflation and the sufferings they endure from it, and urge viewers to "vote Republican—for a change." One other ad shows a look-alike of Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neill running the country out of gas, and a third alleges that the

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Democrats have put the US behind the Soviet Union in military power. It is all a slick appeal to the Archie Bunkers of America. The Democrats, the traditional party of Archie Bunker (and of Carroll O'Connor, who plays him) have no comparable advertising campaign.

When confronted with a list of Republican advantages, Democratic party officials respond that it's always been true: Republicans have the money, and maybe the media, but Democrats have the people, the unions, the bell-ringers, the phone banks, and—when all is said and done—the allegiance of the voters. It may all be true again this year, but for the longer term it looks as though the Republicans have the energy, the imagination, the technology, the attention, the planning, the discipline, the issues, and the organization, too, while the Democrats are burdened by debts and the responsibility of serving an incumbent president who is unable or unwilling to help the party in return. So things may look good for the Democrats for the time being, but unless someone tends to the party machinery soon, things may begin looking a lot different by 1982.

Morton Kondracke

The questions aren't even being asked.

All MXed Up

It may be that the US government has developed a habit of spending most on matters it understands least. The new MX missile and its racetrack system with shelters to provide hiding places, which will cost at least $33 billion when completed, is a recent case in point. The whole MX idea is so enmeshed in unanswered questions, conundrums, and dilemmas that the wonder is that it has gotten this far—except when you consider the atmospherics of Washington politics.

The MX has to be concealable, yet observable. The argument runs that in a few years the Soviets will be able to attack and destroy almost all of our land-based missiles, the locations of which are fixed and known; thus the exact location of the MX in a certain shelter would have to be concealed. But if it is completely concealed, then the Soviets will not be able to verify that we will have only one MX in each racetrack. And if they cannot be certain of that, then we cannot have agreements to limit and reduce missiles—because they could not be counted. The Air Force says that it should be able to solve this problem to Soviet satisfaction. But I wonder whether the Soviets could ever solve it to our satisfaction.

Many proponents of MX are anti-SALT, yet without SALT the MX is not a viable system. A lot of MX supporters have argued strongly that SALT is a waste of time and also undercuts public awareness of the Soviet menace. They see the MX as the great equalizer of the big Soviet missiles. But the survivability of, say, 100 of the planned 200 MXs (50 percent survival is what is hoped for) is a direct function of the number of killer nuclear warheads the Soviets can shoot at our land-based missiles. The experts agree that with SALT, the Soviets would be limited to an insufficient number of these warheads; without SALT, they could have more than enough.

Many of the proponents of SALT are staunchly anti-MX, yet understand that as a political matter they cannot have one without the other. The hardest pill for arms controllers to swallow has been the use of SALT II to codify American development of a big new missile. But it was clear that the military would not support the treaty without a commitment to MX, and that without MX, the votes simply were not there in the Senate.

The conservative governors and other elected representatives of Nevada and Utah (future homes of the MX) are ardent advocates of the MX, yet not for their states. The strategic security of the nation and the influx of money are one thing, but the effects on the environment, the deluge of undesirables, and becoming a prime target for Soviet attack are quite another.

Finally, our land-based missiles are said to be vulnerable now and for the next two years, yet deployment of the MX will not begin until 1986 and not end until 1989. Predictions on deployment dates are usually optimistic. So if the problem of the survivability of our Minuteman missiles is as severe as MX proponents maintain, what do they propose we do before 1986 or later?

How did it come to pass that something as perplexing and messy as the MX has gotten this far—to the point of the proposed 1981 military budget including $1.5 billion for its development? A lot of American experts on nuclear affairs have done an effective job of proselytizing. Their pitch has been that the Soviets have built "monster" missiles that are designed to fight and win a nuclear war, and that we must match them or face the prospect of strategic surrender in a crisis. However prestigious the people making this argument and however plausible their case, never let it be said that Washington is moved often by substance. Overcoming the many questions that have not been answered about the MX has taken good and tough politics.

The Air Force made the MX a matter of life or death. They reasoned that either the land-based missile force was to be modernized or it would soon be out of business. Also, the Air Force had lost a major fight over the B-1 bomber, and they could not afford to lose another without a devastating blow to their political credibility—and their budget.

President Carter and Defense Secretary Harold Brown were sorely reluctant to overrule the Air Force again, but their concern went much further. What they

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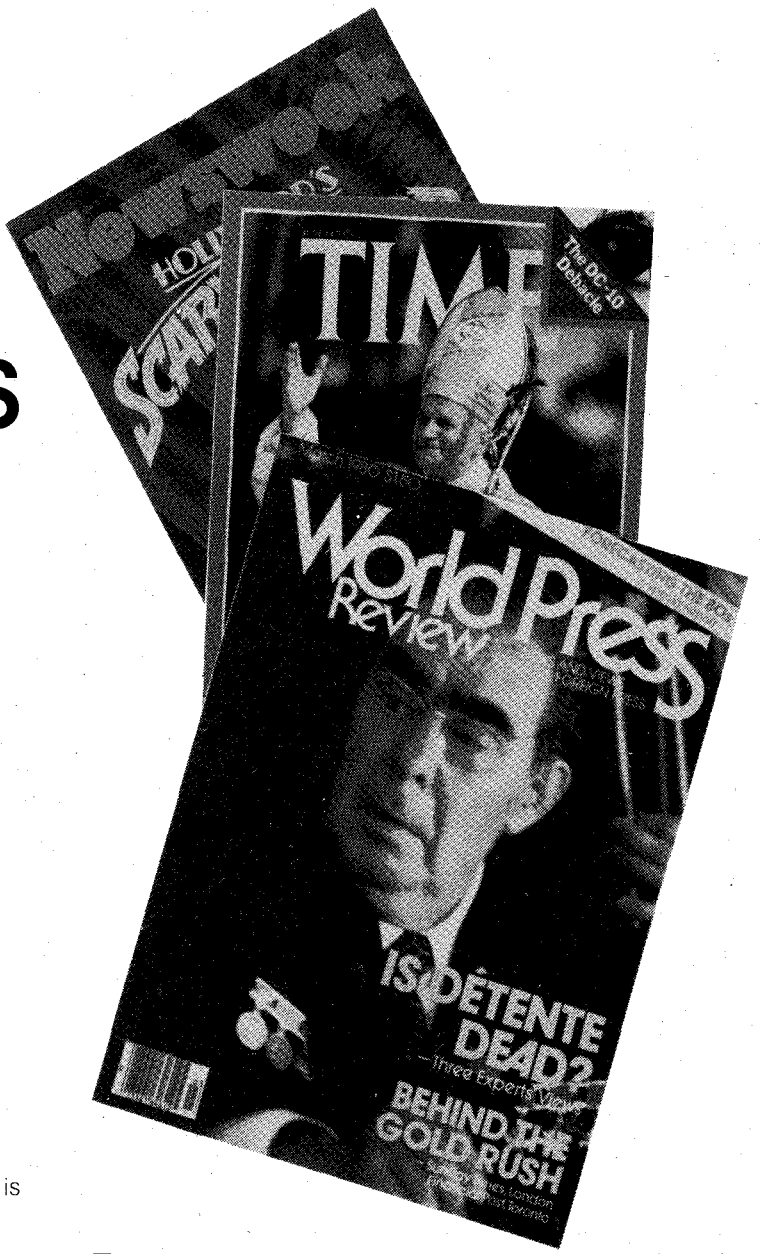

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were bucking and what the Carter administration has been struggling with for some time has been the dramatic shift of mood in Washington from pro-detente to no detente. Some of this was simply dissatisfaction with how Carter was managing relations with the Soviet Union. More of it was in reaction to Soviet moves in the last few years. But the net effect has been to create a climate of near-hysteria in Washington about Moscow.

The acid tests of this mood, indeed of any mood or philosophy, are the questions the mood-makers do not have to answer. The questions that most knowledgeable people in this field realize must be debated are rarely even being asked. At a time when our most pressing military needs are for upgrading the readiness and capability of our conventional forces, do we really want to make a $33-billion-plus commitment to MX? What is really wrong with other, much cheaper proposed solutions to the problem of the vulnerability of our land-based missiles? Why isn't the Carter administration looking into trucks with missiles that could be stationed in several secure areas, then sent out on the highways during a crisis? Or missile-bearing submarines stationed in shallow water off our shores? Are we willing to think of the MX as a big, fat bargaining chip, to spend six billion dollars on it as we did the anti-ballistic missile system, and then trade it in for an agreement with Moscow? But to ask such questions in this environment is to make oneself suspect of opposition and of being soft on Moscow.

It may be that the MX is the best answer to a real problem, but that case has yet to be made convincingly. The Carter administration is too far into the hole politically to start digging out by raising, let alone answering, these questions now. Now it's up to Congress, an even more melancholy prospect.

Leslie H. Gelb

Leslie H. Gelb is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a former director of Politico-Military Affairs at the State Department.

They *shoot* third-party candidates.

Bucking the System

The following exchange took place between Representative John B. Anderson, Republican of Illinois, and Eugene McCarthy at an American Enterprise Institute forum a couple of years ago:

Anderson: "This whole discussion tonight has been dragged into a defense of the two-party system. When I see all of the trouble that the Italians and some of our other European friends have in forming a government, I am darned glad we have a two-party system in this country."

McCarthy: "Oh, John."

Anderson: "And as much as I cherish your right to a platform as an independent candidate, I am not going to sit here quietly and listen to you denigrate the two-party system. It has served our country well over the last 200 years."

If Mr. Anderson should change his mind in the coming days and if his well-to-do liberal friends come up with the big bucks, his will be the sixth major third-party effort in the 20th century. The prior five have little in common, except that they all came to naught; but whether or not they accomplished something in a grander way, they made the elections a lot more fun.

Far and away the most successful third-party candidate in the modern era was the Bull Moose himself, Teddy Roosevelt, running against President William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson. Historians still dispute among themselves what the great brawl of 1912 was all about. According to folklore, Trust-Buster Teddy, appalled at the four-year, pro-big business record of the man he had chosen to succeed him in the White House, could stand it no longer and steeled himself to lead the political equivalent of the charge at San Juan Hill.

Due to the excitement of the Progressive party's convention that August in Chicago, it is hard to unscramble who was on which side. When TR came into the hall, they gave him an oceanic 52-minute ovation; and as the band began to play the Battle Hymn of the Republic, he ended his opening address with the declaration, "We stand at Armageddon and we battle for the Lord." There were some that summer who sneered that Teddy was doing battle for the House of Morgan. The Progressive platform endorsed such radical ideas as a minimum wage for women and referenda to override judicial decisions, but it contained no anti-trust plank. Credit for the famous "missing plank," as Willful Woodrow called it, has traditionally gone to George W. Perkins, a partner in J. P. Morgan's investment banking house, and one of TR's major fundraisers. Perkins and his colleagues, who would be considered Eastern Ripon Society types today, raised so much money for the campaign that Senator Albert Beveridge, a high-decibel Indiana Progressive, warned Teddy, "If we're not careful, we'll be labeled a Wall Street promotion."

Wall Street had seen Teddy in action in the White House and learned that he wasn't really much of a trust-buster. It was the conservative Taft with his tenacious belief in the free-market system who alienated big business with his near-violent enforcement of the Sherman Act. The results, in the words of Taft's biographer, were that, "The traditional cartoonist's symbol of the Republican Party—an overstuffed gentleman wearing a silk hat, morning coat and spats—was sadly inappropriate for this campaign.

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A more accurate presentation would have been a bedraggled old reprobate with patches on his clothes. The gleaming watch chain had vanished from across his ample middle; it has been hocked, no doubt. . . . "

With Wall Street backing the "anti-business" Roosevelt and the conservative Republican in rags, Woodrow Wilson, the Democratic governor of New Jersey, was hand-picked for the nomination by a cabal of big city bosses and millionaires George Steinbrenner would be comfortable with today. As governor, Wilson had double-crossed the bosses by supporting the good government reform crowd, but remained an economic conservative. Although liberals like Louis Brandeis eventually got to Wilson, his campaign image, to use a word they didn't use then, was nothing to ignite an electorate as concerned about economic issues as we are now. To confuse the voters even more, the most popular radical politician in America, the Great Commoner, the Boy Orator of the River Platte, William Jennings Bryan, stumped the country for Wilson.

By the time fall had come, TR had been shot—as another third-party figure, George Wallace, would be 60 years later. Teddy recovered to finish a race that nobody won, although President Taft assuredly got skunked. Not only did the poor man finish third, he failed to carry a single state, and in California his 3914 votes constituted less than one percent of the ballots cast.

The winner hardly did better. With only 42 percent, Wilson pulled a smaller proportion of the total vote than his champion Bryan had done in any of his three runs for the White House. As would be the case with future third-party attempts, the Progressive sally of 1912 was almost completely built around one man and the dramatic, inspirational shadow his figure cast. Although a few Progressive congressmen were elected, there was no Progressive party in any abiding sense, no permanent state and county committees; practically speaking, the party vanished the day after the election.

Did its ideas triumph? Was the oft-imputed power of third parties to influence larger ones operative? At least as many of the measures advocated by the Socialists (who got six percent of the vote that year) eventually were enacted as those pushed by the Progressives. The Progressives themselves were something of a heterogeneous lot, who may have thought they had more in common than they did. Any unified political principles and values faded every which way. In later years, important Progressive figures would divide over Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and over America's entrance into World War II. But their name and reputation was so favorably remembered that the name "Progressive" would be used twice more by 20th-century third parties.

In 1924 a new Progressive party was hatched with Fighting Bob LaFollette as its hero and candidate. LaFollette, a Wisconsin Republican senator, had refused to endorse Roosevelt in 1912 and was generally credited or blamed for throwing the state to Wilson by his "silent endorsement." The power to compel hero worship and stimulate goose pimples on the soul has been more important in fueling up third-party candidacies than consistent allegiances or the careful tending of political favors.

Posterity has the same opinion of Calvin Coolidge's mediocrity that his contemporaries had, but he was nominated by the Republicans for the same ancestor-worshipping, rigidily reverential reasons that the delegates' grandchildren would nominate Jerry Ford 52 years later. The Democrats retaliated by making such fools of themselves that a third-party try was inevitable if only for aesthetic reasons.

The 1924 Democratic Convention set records that stand unchallenged and unapproached. The convention could claim it wrote the longest platform, cost the most in uninflated, standardized dollars, had the most nominees for president (60), consumed the most hot dogs, lasted the longest (two weeks), and took the most ballots (an epochal 103) before a corporation lawyer named John W. Davis was given the palm. The Pier 9 brawl preceeding Davis's nomination had featured battles over the Ku Klux Klan, Catholicism, and prohibition, as Governor Al Smith of New York ("the happy warrior," as his campaign manager Franklin Roosevelt called him) dueled Woodrow Wilson's son-in-law, William McAdoo, for the nomination, a prize worth so little after days of balloting in the New York summer that Tom Taggert, the boss of the Indiana delegation, simply flipped a coin to determine whom his state would support.

Coolidge versus Davis was as depressing to Americans of political refinement as Carter versus Reagan or Kennedy versus Bush is now. But good taste doesn't make good tuna, Charlie, and the Progressive Convention that pulled itself together in Cleveland that summer to nominate Fighting Bob was an incoherent potpourri of altruists running from General Jacob Coxey to the poet Edwin Markham. William Z. Foster, the head of the Communist party, was not even allowed to watch, but everything else was let into this meeting of young delegates, many of whom were from Ivy League and Seven Sisters colleges. "I'd rather be right than regular," Republican congressman Fiorello LaGuardia told the convention, but a vague pro-labor patina aside, the platform of LaFollette and Senator Burton K. Wheeler, a Montana Democrat, already had a dated, turn-of-the-century look to it.

The voters responded by not responding. Forty-nine percent of the eligibles stayed home. The most exciting event in the campaign occurred when the Vote-for-Davis blimp, suspended over the Polo grounds for the

Coming:

The Defense Conundrum.

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Army-Notre Dame game, exploded and fell to earth, to the great annoyance of J. W. Coogan, who claimed the infernal machine had damaged the roof of his football stadium.

Davis spent most of the campaign attacking not Coolidge and the Republicans but LaFollette and his socialist camp followers. Shortly before the election, H. L. Mencken was moved to write: "Dr. Coolidge is for the Haves and Dr. LaFollette is for the Have Nots. But whom is Dr. Davis for? I'm sure I don't know, and neither does anyone else." Ultimately Davis found out; he cast a vote for FDR in 1932. Though he lived until 1955, he never voted for a Democrat again.

LaFollette got 16.5 percent of the vote, mostly in the West where his brand of progressivism was still popular. LaFollette Progressives of one tincture or another were elected to Congress in small numbers, but as in 1912, the effort was constructed around the man and, when he died the next year, whatever it was that brought the idealists of 1924 together dissolved.

Twenty-four years later the candidate of the third Progressive party was the editor of this magazine, Henry A. Wallace, one of the most important figures in the New Deal period, but now largely unknown, thanks in no small measure to the disasters of the 1948 campaign. During FDR's first two terms, Wallace had been secretary of agriculture; for Roosevelt's third term he was vice president, but the maestro dumped him from the ticket because the conservative elements in the Democratic party found him too liberal; Roosevelt thought much of Wallace, who was indeed a strange but gifted man, and made him secretary of commerce. He and Truman were completely incompatible on every level, so that by 1947 Wallace was out of government, in at *The New Republic*, and the hero of every liberal who had come to discern that Harry Truman some day would be admitted posthumously into the Republican party.

Truman's adviser, the ophidian Clark Clifford, came up with a plan whereby Truman would be able to make himself look like the liberal he wasn't by proposing legislation he didn't particularly care for, but which he knew the Republican-controlled Congress wasn't going to pass. In a memo to his boss, Clifford whispered that "the Administration should select the issues upon which there will be conflict with the majority in Congress. It can assume that it will get no major part of its own program approved. Its tactics must, therefore, be entirely different than if there were any real point to bargaining and compromise."

Whether or not they fooled the liberals, Truman and Clifford terrified enough southern politicians to generate what became known as the Dixiecrat party. The Dixiecrats ran Strom Thurmond, now a Republican senator, for president. Conceived as a means to leverage the regular Democrats away from civil rights, the Dixiecrats were more of a gimmick than a full-fledged party, and the only major third-party effort in the 20th century not built around the personality of a superstar. The Dixiecrats carried four states and got over a million votes, but they weren't nearly as interesting, not did they stir up the furor caused by Wallace and his running mate, Glen Taylor, the "singing cowboy senator" from Idaho.

Early polls showed that something like seven percent of the voters, enough to give the election to the Republican, Thomas Dewey, favored Wallace and his brand of liberalism—which put its greatest stress on avoiding conflict with Russians and on civil rights for blacks at home. Then things began to break badly for the Progressives. The Communist coup in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin blockade had much the same effect on public opinion as Afghanistan has had on support for detente and SALT II. Liberal opinion split, while persons of all persuasions began to accuse Wallace and Taylor of being Communist dupes and the Progressive party itself a catspaw of the Reds.

The following is the lead H. L. Mencken filed shortly before Wallace and Taylor were nominated at the Progressive party convention:

> *Philadelphia, July 24*—After lurking in the catacombs and sewers of the hall for three days, the Communists sneaked into the main arena . . . and put the innocent delegates to the Wallace convention over the barrel. Tonight the rules of the new party are precisely what they wanted them to be, and their trusted stooges are sitting on almost every salient stool in the party organization. The Communists are old hands at such tricks. . . .

The rest of the press was no kinder and the candidates didn't always help themselves, as when Senator Taylor said the "pink" Communists were for the Progressives but the "red" ones weren't. He explained, "I think the pink Communists, who believe in changes in our form of government by evolution rather than revolution, will support our party. The red Communists will support Mr. Dewey because they hope that the best way to get a revolution is to have another Hoover administration."

Although arguments still occasionally flare over the degree of communist control of the 1948 Progressive effort, the Wallace/Taylor campaign was a disaster because of the communist issue. Wallace, a moody and puzzling man, didn't help matters by his sometimes sullen behavior. There was, for example, his refusal to explain or deny his relationship with a certain Nicholas Konstantinovich Roerich, always referred to as a "guru" by the papers. In 1934, it was alleged that Wallace had put the guru on the federal payroll and sent him to outer Mongolia to collect evidence of the Second Coming of Christ. Whatever he was doing, the issue blossomed with the publication in 1948 of the guru letters, never-authenticated epistles between Wallace and the Mongolian mystic.

On election day, the Progressives were decimated, getting only about two percent of the vote. The fear that they might get more probably induced Truman and the Democrats to make some civil rights gestures,

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but other than that, all visible aspects of the Progressives disappeared. The children of these people, who tended to play guitars and disdain ties, seem to have turned up in jeans and large numbers 20 years later during the anti-Vietnam War protests. Wallace, who had made himself a very wealthy man by developing and selling superior hybrid seeds, died repentant. He swung around later and said that he was wrong and Truman had been right about foreign policy. To this day, Taylor, who is still alive, never has recanted. After being defeated for reelection, he also became an entrepreneurial success by inventing and marketing a superior brand of toupee, known as a Taylor Topper.

The last significant third-party effort was the other Wallace's, Governor George's American Independence party campaign of 1968. He carried five southern states and got more than 13 percent of the vote. Even outside the South he got eight percent of the vote. But we're too close to that turbulent year to see if the Wallace uprising represented more than marginal white dissatisfaction at the way civil rights and pro-black government programs were being handled. Wallace's speechifying against "pointy-headed" intellectuals at HEW "playing God" doesn't differ markedly from Woodrow Wilson telling the voters, "I don't want a smug lot of experts to sit down behind closed doors in Washington and play Providence with me."

For the most part, the Wallace platform of 1968 was a New Dealish document calling for everything from counter-cyclical government employment to increases in social security benefits and aid to urban mass transit. In retrospect, it appears that Wallace wanted blacks to ride in the back of the new subways both he and Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic candidate, wanted to build.

In 1972, after Wallace was shot, his party nominated a candidate who got only about one percent of the vote. As with its predecessors, Wallace's party had no life or direction without its inspirational leaders. For political parties to be effective in any sense of that word, the organization must make the candidate, not the other way around. They have to grow from the bottom up and not be crafted as personal vehicles for political stars.

For much of the 20th century, the Socialist party, small though it was, did that. It had its stars, too, in Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas, but it also had enough of a life of its own to keep the ideas and programs it stood for floating and in the general national discussion. Although it never pulled an impressive vote after 1924, it may have had more impact than the efforts that did. In like manner, the current Libertarian party, only eight years old, is much better known than its candidates. How much influence it will have remains to be seen, but for all third-party men and women, there is the example of the People's party, and still-despised Pops of the 1890s. The Populists, aside from contributing their name to our language, were the one party since the Civil War to completely disarrange and rearrange party alignment and party content.

If John Anderson runs, the best he can hope for is the ambiguous and undecipherable impact that seems to be the fate of third-party candidates.

Nicholas von Hoffman

Nicholas von Hoffman is a syndicated columnist. His latest book is *Make-Believe Presidents* (Pantheon).

The phone that's bugged may be yours.

Big Brother Lives

The now-celebrated conflict between the Carter administration and the Senate Intelligence Committee over prior notice of covert operations has obscured the fact that the intelligence act now before the committee would, if passed, deal a serious blow to the right of Americans to be free of governmental surveillance of their private and political lives.

The National Intelligence Act of 1980 (S. 2284) is a long and confusing piece of legislation. At its heart are a series of provisions that authorize the surveillance of Americans both at home and abroad using intrusive techniques such as wiretaps and informants. The authorizations are many and the restrictions are few. Indeed, authority for many past abuses could be found buried in the intricacies of this charter.

For many years the White House and the intelligence agencies resisted efforts to establish congressional intelligence committees. They argued that intelligence activities had to be carried out in secret with only the minimal supervision provided by subcommittees of the Armed Services and Appropriations committees. Intelligence fiascos such as the U-2 espisode and the Bay of Pigs did not shake this consensus. What finally led each House to create an ad-hoc committee to investigate the intelligence agencies was growing evidence that they had conducted surveillance of American citizens in violation of their charters, the laws of the land, and the Constitution.

The 1975 resolution establishing the Senate committee (the Church Committee) instructed its members to determine "the extent, if any, to which illegal, improper, or unethical activities were engaged in" by the intelligence agencies. The committee also was instructed to look into specific allegations of illegal domestic surveillance by the CIA, domestic intelligence and counterintelligence operations directed at Americans by the FBI, and the origins and disposition of the Huston Plan (the Nixon White House scheme to authorize illegal surveillance of Americans).

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Although both the House ad-hoc Committee (the Pike Committee) and the Church Committee explored other issues, including the quality of the intelligence product, their primary focus was on the rights of Americans.

The investigations of the two committees, reinforced by the report of the presidentially appointed Rockefeller Commission as well as newspaper reports and documents released under the Freedom of Information Act, painted a picture of substantial abuses of constitutional rights of Americans by the intelligence agencies, usually with White House approval.

By now, the record of FBI and CIA abuses is well known. But it bears repeating at least in summary form because memories in Washington tend to be very short.

The Church Committee summarized what it had learned as follows:

> Too many people have been spied upon by too many Government agencies and too much information has been collected. The Government has often undertaken the secret surveillance of citizens on the basis of their political beliefs, even when those beliefs posed no threat of violence or illegal acts on behalf of a hostile foreign power. The Government, operating primarily through secret informants, but also using other intrusive techniques such as wiretaps, microphone "bugs", surreptitious mail opening, and break-ins, has swept in vast amounts of information about the personal lives, views, and associations of American citizens. Investigations of groups deemed potentially dangerous—and even of groups suspected of associating with potentially dangerous organizations—have continued for decades, despite the fact that those groups did not engage in unlawful activity. Groups and individuals have been harassed and disrupted because of their political views and their lifestyles. Investigations have been based upon vague standards whose breadth made excessive collection inevitable. Unsavory and vicious tactics have been employed—including anonymous attempts to break up marriages, disrupt meetings, ostracize persons from their professions, and provoke target groups into rivalries that might result in deaths. Intelligence agencies have served the political and personal objectives of presidents and other high officials. While the agencies often committed excesses in response to pressure from high officials in the Executive branch and Congress, they also occasionally initiated improper activities and then concealed them from officials whom they had a duty to inform.

Both the Church and Pike committees, with the memory of extensive abuses freshly in mind, recommended substantial limits on the right to conduct surveillance of Americans while expressing the belief that the legitimate intelligence needs of the United States could be met within those limits.

On the key issue of the standard under which surveillance of Americans could be conducted for counterintelligence purposes, the Church Committee recommended that such investigations be based on a finding that the American is consciously working for a hostile foreign intelligence service and engaged in activity that violates the criminal laws of the US.

The Senate reacted positively to the proposal that a permanent committee on intelligence be created to conduct oversight of the intelligence community and to report appropriate legislation, including a charter. The House followed suit in the 96th Congress.

As it relates to the rights of Americans, the new bill has the support of both the administration and the leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee, though it moves substantially away from the recommendations of the Church Committee. It entirely abandons a criminal standard for investigation of Americans and permits investigations both at home and abroad of any American engaged in clandestine intelligence activity—a term which remains undefined. It also introduces a wholly new rationale for surveillance of Americans, permitting such surveillance if the American possesses foreign intelligence information of interest to the intelligence community.

The fundamental flaw of the new intelligence charter derives from the fact that it was drafted primarily by the intelligence agencies. Their primary concern, quite legitimately, was to ensure that they had all the authority they might need in every conceivable situation to gather information that might be of value for foreign intelligence purposes or counterintelligence. Since circumstances are conceivable in which an American abroad might possess information important to the government, by the logic of the intelligence community, the government should be able to bug, tap, or burglarize without regard for the person involved, even if he or she is in no way connected with a foreign power. To prevent abuse of this authority, the bill assumes that if the president or the attorney general has approved or been informed of such a surveillance, no abuses will occur.

The difficulty with this approach is that it virtually ignores the lessons presented in the Church and Pike reports. Political surveillance often took place because presidents wanted information on their political opponents and pressed the intelligence agencies to produce it.

Indeed, modern political surveillance dates from a request by President Roosevelt to the FBI to investigate Americans who were writing him letters protesting the drift toward war. Since then, almost every president has used the intelligence agencies for such purposes. Attorney generals have been no more dependable in resisting abuses. It was Ramsey Clark who ordered intensive surveillance of the black ghettos; John Mitchell approved every warrantless wiretap of the Nixon administration. One does not have to call into question in the slightest the commitment of the incumbent president and attorney general to the rule of law to question whether high-level approvals are by themselves a sufficient assurance that the power to conduct surveillance of Americans will not be abused.

Whatever else it is, the National Intelligence Act is not easy to understand. Its standards for surveillance of

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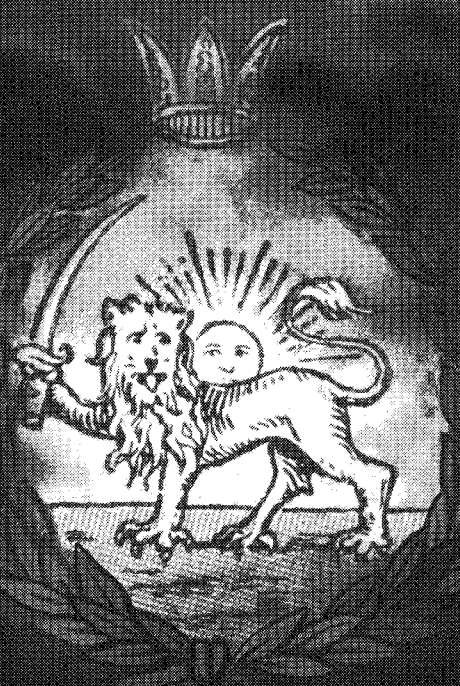
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SHAH

by Amin Saikal



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Americans at home and abroad are obscured in a thicket of anomalous and ambiguous provisions and definitions. It is impossible to know which are deliberate and which unintentional or to grasp the full meaning and intent of each grant of authority.

Five years from now a CIA director trying in good faith to obey its dictates in the face of White House pressures would have great difficulty figuring out what he was supposed to do. What, for example, is the standard for gathering positive foreign intelligence? The opening paragraph of the section of the bill dealing with "Collection of Foreign Intelligence" reads as follows:

> Sec. 213. (a) Collection of foreign intelligence by means of covert techniques shall not be directed against United States persons, except in the course of collection of counterintelligence or counterterrorism intelligence, or in extraordinary cases when authorized in accordance with this section.

The paragraph appears to permit the use of all non-"covert" techniques to conduct surveillance of Americans who are in possession of foreign intelligence information. Paragraph (d) of the same section confirms this, again in the negative, by stating that only the FBI may conduct such investigations within the United States. Turning to the definitions section one discovers that "foreign intelligence" includes "information pertaining to the capabilities, intentions, or activities of any foreign states, government, organization, association or individual."

Thus, in its present form, the charter permits the president and the attorney general to authorize the FBI at home and the CIA abroad to use all clandestine techniques short of electronic surveillance and burglaries to investigate any American who possesses any information relating to an individual foreigner or a foreign organization or government. The person under surveillance need not have done anything illegal or be in covert contact with a foreign government. The person need only have in his or her possession information the governments wants. This means that any American returning from overseas, in regular or occasional contact with foreigners, or with knowledge of foreign matters, is subject to having his or her records seized without notice, organizations infiltrated, and to any number of covert forms of eavesdropping. It is difficult to imagine a more sweeping power. No American of any interest to the intelligence services would fail to qualify for surveillance under this standard.

Standards for "counterintelligence"—efforts to learn about the activities of foreign intelligence services and to neutralize them—are equally hazy. Counterintelligence investigations are permitted "only on the basis of facts or circumstances that reasonably indicate that the person is or may be engaged in clandestine intelligence activities on behalf of a foreign power."

Strangely enough, S. 2284 never bothers to define "clandestine intelligence activity." One gathers that this is because the administration and the Senate Intelligence Committee did not agree on what would constitute such activity. If this is so, they have failed to agree on the single most important concept in the charter.

If clandestine intelligence activity were to be defined as illegal activity conducted for a foreign intelligence service, there would be little problem. The intelligence community, however, prefers a much looser definition. Here, for example, is how the CIA defined the term in its implementing directive to the Carter Executive Order on Intelligence (12036):

> 'Clandestine intelligence activity' means an activity conducted for intelligence purposes or for the purpose of affecting political or governmental processes by or on behalf of a foreign power in a manner tending to conceal from the United States Government the nature or fact of such activity or the role of such foreign power, and any knowing activity conducted in support of such activity.

There is nothing in S. 2284 that would prevent the intelligence community from continuing to use that definition. But under such a standard, couldn't the antiwar movement have been under surveillance on the grounds that it might be concealing the fact that it was agitating for an end to the war on behalf of the Viet Cong? Couldn't anyone working for legislation that would aid a country such as Israel or Greece or Pakistan be put under surveillance if the government suspected that he or she was doing so at the request of the foreign government?

One simply cannot know what this section of the bill authorizes. What is clear is that infiltration of organizations, access to financial records, use of informants, mail covers, and physical surveillance are all authorized. It also authorizes counterintelligence and counterterrorist *activities* directed against Americans at home and abroad. Such activities may be undertaken "to counter or protect against clandestine intelligence activity of a foreign government"; are we supposed to be reassured by the caveat in section 111 (e) that the intent is not to authorize actions taken for the *purpose* of depriving any person of any rights secured by the Constitution?

What is one left with? As FBI director William Webster admitted before the House Intelligence Committee, the intelligence community may undertake the kinds of disruptive actions that were part of COINTELPRO—false letters, agents provocateurs, stimulation of violence—even if the recognized consequence is to disrupt lawful political activity. Without suggesting that the intelligence community intends to use such power once it is formally established, one may still ask: where is it prohibited?

A third independent authority to collect information about Americans covers those who are judged to be potential sources of intelligence information. With the consent of the head of the agency doing the collection

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and with notice to the Department of Justice, any technique save mail covers, electronic surveillance, and burglaries may be used against any American to determine if that person or anyone else should be recruited by the agency. Files released under the FOIA to antiwar activists and other critics of American policy show that the CIA often conducted investigations of such individuals in order to decide whether to approach them for operational assistance, and often continued such investigations for years. Have the administration and the Senate committee forgotten that the FBI investigated Daniel Schorr because the president said Schorr was being considered for a job?

S. 2284 also would authorize secret searches. Agents of the FBI at home could break into homes without first knocking and could seize or photograph material without leaving behind a warrant or a list of what was seized. The Fourth Amendment prohibits this, and there is no "national security exception" to these rules. This would have permitted Richard Nixon to direct the CIA to bug the hotel room of Joseph Kraft in Paris to learn what the Hanoi negotiating team had told him. The FBI, of course, did bug Kraft, but everybody including the Nixon White House saw it as an illegal act.

It is dangerously naive to believe that we will never again be in a period of domestic political controversy akin to the Vietnam and civil rights struggles. Indeed, the controversy over nuclear power and the draft are now accelerating; it is not difficult to imagine other such controversies in the 1980s. The role the intelligence agencies will play in future domestic disputes will be determined by how Congress deals with this legislation.

Thus far, the Senate Intelligence Committee has focused only on issues that currently are dividing the administration and the intelligence committees. It should now begin to explore the meaning of the sweeping powers this charter allows for surveillance of Americans. It should propose, and Congress should legislate, some simple, clear rules and require the intelligence community to operate under them—even if that means some diminution of their ability to conduct surveillance of Americans. Such rules should at least require that Americans not suspected of illegal activity should not be subject to surveillance; highly instrusive techniques such as wiretaps should be banned for use on Americans at home and abroad, except where there is probable cause of criminal conduct, as required by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act; and finally, that Americans abroad should be treated no differently than Americans at home.

If Congress does nothing, or if it enacts the National Intelligence Act of 1980 as written, we will have ignored the warning of the Church Committee that "unless new and tighter controls are established by legislation, domestic intelligence activities threaten to undermine our democratic society and fundamentally alter its nature."

Morton H. Halperin
Jerry J. Berman

Morton H. Halperin, a former Defense Department and NSC staff official, now directs the Center for National Security Studies. *Jerry J. Berman* is legislative counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Grey Eminences, XII.

Reston on His Laurels

by Stephen Chapman

On the subject of James Reston, almost everyone in "Washington" seems to agree on three things. The first is that he is one of the top journalists of his time. To most of his readers, Reston is merely the senior columnist of America's premier newspaper, the *New York Times*, but in his younger days he was much more than that. He was a first-rate reporter, who probably broke more big news stories than anyone before or since. His first big scoop came in 1944, when he got hold of the full position papers of all the parties attending the Dumbarton Oaks conference (which laid the groundwork for the United Nations), an exclusive that won him the first of two Pulitzer Prizes. Later John Foster Dulles gave him the secret Yalta papers. By 1953 Reston ("Scotty" to everyone in "Washington") had become so big a star that when the *Washington Post* tried to lure him away, Washington bureau chief Arthur Krock, then 66, gave up his own job to keep the 43-

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year-old reporter aboard. That position, combined with the column he began writing the same year, gave Reston unrivalled access and influence. It also gave him the attention of presidents. Eisenhower, angered by something Reston had written, delivered a line now famous in journalistic circles: "Who does Scotty Reston think he is, telling me how to run the country?" In 1960 he was the subject of a *Time* magazine cover story—an honor accorded few members of the working press—which described him as a "crack reporter, a good writer, a thoughtful columnist, and an able administrative chief of the biggest newspaper bureau in Washington." Any number of journalists who grew up during Reston's heyday have adopted him as their role model. My colleague Morton Kondracke even confessed to me that for years he carried a photograph of Reston in his wallet, "for inspiration."

Everyone also agrees that Reston is a thoroughly nice man, which isn't necessarily what one expects of those at the top of their professions in the nation's capital. Asked what sort of person he is, one *Times* man says simply, "Wonderful." Another, asked the same question, says, "What can I say without sounding dopey? He's a very nice man." It's hard to find anyone in Washington who genuinely dislikes Reston, even among his critics. The reason is that he takes great care to treat people graciously, even when he doesn't need to.

Linda Greenhouse, now the *Times*'s Supreme Court reporter, started her *Times* career as Reston's assistant or "clerk." (Reston adopts promising young journalists for one-year stints at this position, modeled after Supreme Court clerkships. He got the idea from Felix Frankfurter.) Greenhouse says that on her first day Reston asked her to call Ted Sorenson who he said could be reached through Paul Weiss. She called every Paul Weiss in the Manhattan phone book but found no trace of Sorenson. When she told Reston (she recounts in a recent *festschrift* by former Reston clerks), "he didn't groan, tear his hair, or—more important, and the reason for my undying gratitude—laugh at me. He gently explained that Paul, Weiss was a New York law firm where Ted Sorenson was working, looked up the number and gave it to me." J. Anthony Lukas, a former *Times* reporter, wrote an unflattering profile of Reston (who had recruited him) for [*MORE*] magazine in 1973. Nervous about how it would be received, he sent Reston a copy with a note saying, "Whatever you may feel about this piece, I want you to know it was written with respect and affection." Reston wrote back to say he saw nothing wrong with the article and invited Lukas to dinner the next time he was in Washington.

But there is a third thing that most of his colleagues in Washington agree on. At least nowadays, his column isn't very good. "The column isn't consistently as excellent as it used to be" is how Jonathan Yardley of the *Washington Star*, Reston's first clerk, delicately phrases it. Others are not so charitable. Reston takes little notice of such criticism. "Some things give you satisfaction and guidance, and the main thing is the respect of your colleagues," he says, confident that he enjoys that respect. But the flaws in his column are both real and serious. Reston is 71 years old, and has been at it three times a week for 27 years. Acknowledging that this has gotten to be a strain, Reston says he plans to cut back to two times a week later this year. (He says he has no interest in retiring to write his memoirs.) But there are flaws in his column that cannot be explained by the innate limits of the format, or excused by advancing age.

Reston, like any columnist, has a few pet themes and devices that pop up repeatedly in columns on almost any topic, as a substitute for thought. One favorite is his capsule summary of the "mood in Washington," which he usually employs as the first sentence in the column, like this: "This city these days somehow seems happier in sort of a goofy way than it has in a long time." Or this: "Washington is now wondering whether Carter was too naive and trusting with Brezhnev, and is now over-reacting to Brezhnev's lunge into Afghanistan." Or this: "The mood of Washington has changed in the last few days." Reston's knack for succinctly capturing the innermost feelings of millions of people is not limited to Washington. Last year he began one column, "You cannot come to London these days without feeling that everything looks the same but is somehow quite different."

Then there are the metaphors, which in Reston's lexicon consist of only two: sports and the weather. The former presumably go back to his early days as an Associated Press sportswriter. Of the presidential primaries he wrote last October, "These are not the playoffs but the tryouts." John Connally, he said, "always passes on first down." Some Republicans, he noted, think "the GOP, like the Washington Redskins, needs to draft younger and more imaginative men who can get into the playoffs in the 1980s." The weather is never far from Reston's mind. "The sense of relief [in "Washington"] is as clear here as the Indian summer sunshine," he wrote last fall. Sometimes he even manages to combine his favorite devices, as he did last November: "The mood of officials in Moscow seems almost as bleak as the weather." When I interviewed Reston, he told me he was thinking of three possibilities for his next column: Walter Mondale, Lloyd Cutler, or a star magnolia tree on the White House grounds as a symbol of renewal and hope. When it appeared, the column began, "There are no roses in the White House garden yet, but at the northeast gate there is an old arthritic star magnolia tree. . . ."

Then there is the old threat-from-within-or-threat-from-without construct. In January, Reston praised Edward Kennedy for raising "the question of whether the threat to the nation comes from abroad—in Iran and Afghanistan—or whether, as Lincoln suggested, that it lies within ourselves." In February he commended John Anderson for recognizing that "the red ink in our economy is probably going to be more of a threat to

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the security of the Republic than the Red Army in Afghanistan."

But Reston's favorite theme is that things aren't as bad as they seem. " . . . in the perspective of the century, with its World Wars and depressions, our present troubles, bad as they are, are not all that tragic," he wrote cheerfully in December. In his last column of 1975, he wrote, "It wasn't our best year, but at least we struggled." And just a few weeks ago he wrote a column in the form of a letter to his new grandson, in which he noted, "Half the human race was going to bed hungry every night when you were born, and the nations were still spending over $600 billion a year on guns of one sort or another, but my guess is that, in your own time, they may come to their senses." On what he bases this guess, he does not reveal.

Any columnist is doomed to repeat himself occasionally and to overuse a few devices, though not all can get away with it as brazenly as Reston. But it isn't foreordained that any columnist has to be so gentle with those he disagrees with, so reverent toward those in power, or so uncritical a voice for those sources on whom he relies for his exclusive interviews. One *Times* colleague characterizes Reston as "a gentleman." That is the best description of Reston as a person, and it also captures all his strengths and weaknesses as a journalist. As one would expect of a gentleman, Reston is a gracious and considerate man, his one real failing in this regard being his rather traditional view of the role of women. But his gentlemanliness spills over into his work as well—and usually with unfortunate results. Reston is the sort of gentleman in public life Henry Stimson had in mind when he said (objecting to American spies breaking enemy codes), "Gentlemen don't read other people's mail." Nor do gentlemen, when they settle down to column-writing, go out of their way to attack adversaries, to alienate valuable sources, or even to take strong and controversial positions. All these gentlemanly flaws mar Reston's work. And over the years his gentlemanliness has drawn him closer and closer to those people whose actions he is supposed to report, interpret, and criticize, until he often is reduced to acting as the establishment's conduit to people who care what the establishment thinks. "The *Times* always had a tradition of the head of the bureau in any capital acting as a semi-official spokesman, even in Moscow," says one veteran Washington newsman, "and in some ways Scotty follows in that tradition." Mrs. John Harlan, wife of the Supreme Court Justice, once told Reston that her husband never voted in elections because he felt it would be a conflict of interest. Reston replied, "That's odd. All of us at the *New York Times* vote." Ben Bagdikian, former senior editor of the *Washington Post*, says of Reston, "He sees the press more as a natural ally of the government than as a neutral observer. He's essentially a presenter of established policy."

Reston's identification with the powerful manifests itself in several ways. Frequently Reston will write a column consisting almost entirely of quotations and paraphrases from someone important. In recent months he has written such columns about (or rather with) Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of West Germany, Prime Minister Joe Clark of Canada, Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira of Japan, Senator Edward Kennedy, George Kennan, and his favorite, Henry Kissinger. Nicholas von Hoffman says these people talk to Reston because "he's a bulletin board. He's less likely to change your copy than anyone else." That certainly seems to be true. Reston rarely even interjects an opinion about what his subject has said, except to offer some mild praise for "raising important questions," or some such nonsense. Usually these interviews merely let the subject pontificate about whatever pleases him.

Sometimes Reston doesn't even need an interview to get enough quotations to fill up a column; a speech will do, as when British prime minister Margaret Thatcher spoke last December in New York, or when Cyrus Vance spoke in Chicago last May. In these cases Reston often will justify the repetition of a public speech by using it as the occasion for fulsome praise, as he did with Vance: "For almost a generation in Washington louder and more dramatic voices have overwhelmed Cyrus Vance's muted common sense, but he endures. . . . Vance commands the confidence not only of the president but of the leaders of the Congress and the people he has to face in negotiations with other nations." In Thatcher he found a proponent of his own favorite theme: "She reminded us that it is possible to face the perplexities of the 1970s and that she called 'the dangerous decade of the '80s' with serenity and even with hope."

Kissinger is Reston's most frequent guest columnist. Most recently the former secretary of state used Reston to communicate his belief that "there is now such a crisis of confidence abroad in the conduct of US economic and overseas policy that it would be difficult for Mr. Carter to establish an effective working relationship in Europe, the Middle East or with the Soviet Union were he to be re-elected." Reston relies heavily on Kissinger as both source and subject; once he even headlined a column "By Henry Kissinger, with James Reston." Even some of Reston's most devoted admirers concede that his apparent closeness to Kissinger is embarrassing. But Reston scoffs at the notion that he is too cozy with Kissinger. "It's an entirely professional relationship," he says. "He's been in my house since 1969 only two times; I've never been in his. I've never been too close to him. If you think so, ask him about my reports on the Christmas bombing or the Paris talks."

Kissinger did indeed question the accuracy of Reston's report on the Paris peace talks in 1972, which said the US was prepared to sign an agreement alone if the South Vietnamese refused to sign. But if that report caused Kissinger any irritation, Reston has more

(continued on page 24)

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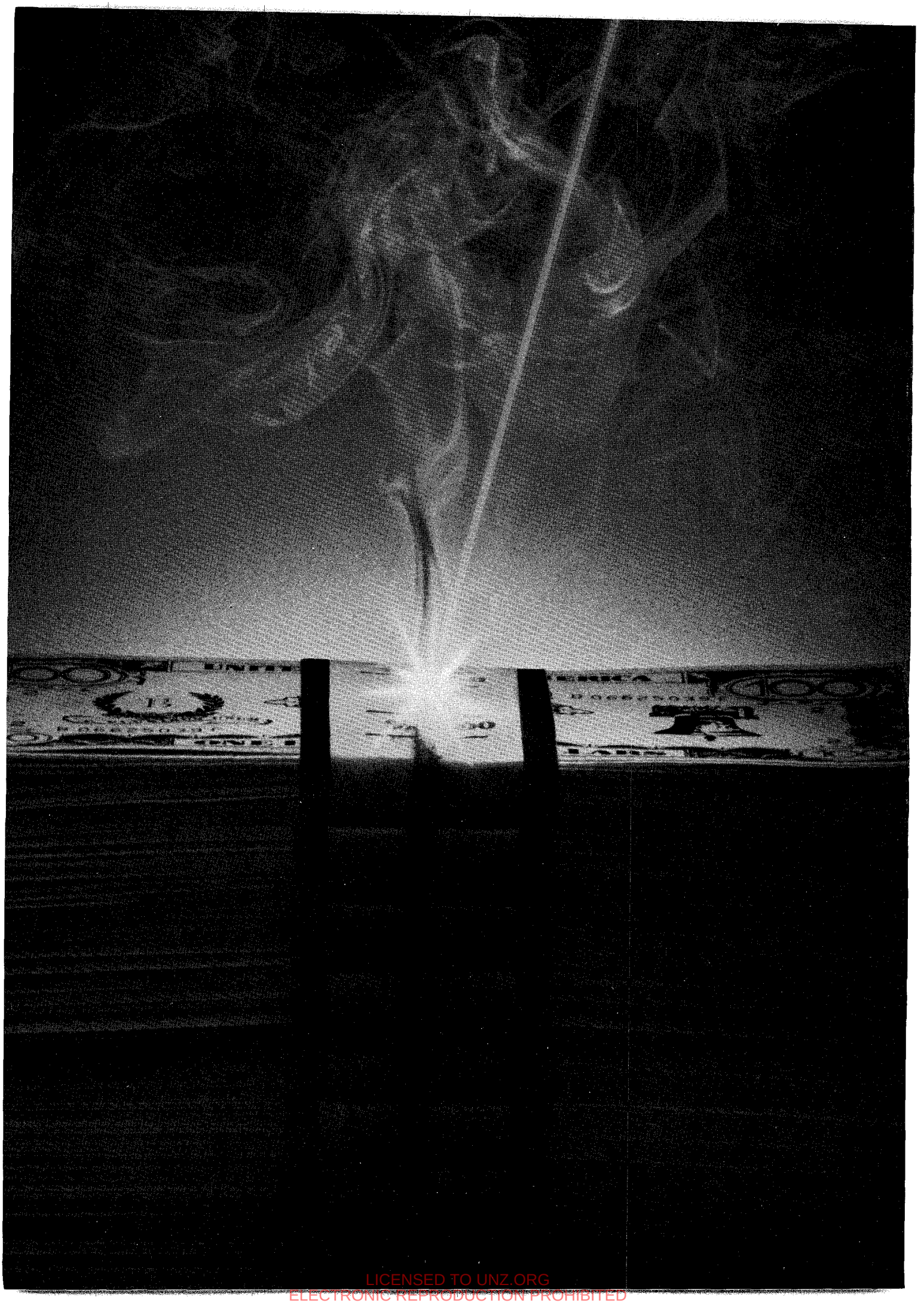

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than made up for it since by offering him frequent opportunities to keep his name and opinions in the limelight. As for the 1972 Christmas bombing column, Kissinger had nothing to be angry about. Reston did criticize the bombing as "war by tantrum"—a pretty mild phrase, considering the circumstances—but he was referring to Nixon, not his foreign policy adviser. In fact, only a few days later Reston went out of his way to absolve Kissinger of any blame. "It may be, and probably is, true that Mr. Kissinger as well as Secretary of State Rogers and most of the senior officers in the State Department are opposed to the President's bombing offensive in North Vietnam. . . . [Kissinger] has said nothing in public about the bombing in North Vietnam, which he undoubtedly opposes." Reston even suggested that Nixon would have to stop the bombing to prevent Kissinger from resigning. For an official whose reputation depended largely on his cultivation of liberal columnists and reporters, it was very useful to be portrayed as the dove in the Nixon administration. It hardly strains credibility to suspect that Reston was shrewdly used in this instance, or in another, later one. In January 1976, Reston wrote of UN ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Mr. Kissinger agrees with Moynihan's defense of American interests, but not with his style, his provocative rhetoric, his rambling off-the-cuff debating tactics, his self-concerning appeals to the rest of the US Foreign Service, or his vicious attacks on the State Department bureaucracy." Moynihan later wrote that when Reston's column appeared, Theodore White called to tell him he had no choice but to resign, since Kissinger obviously was using Reston to undermine him. (Moynihan soon did resign. He, like everyone else, recognized that James Reston was the official voice of the semi-authorities.) Here again some skepticism would have served Reston well. It isn't likely that Kissinger had changed his mind about Moynihan, whose opinions and style were no secret to his former Harvard colleague. What had changed was Kissinger's view of Moynihan's usefulness to the administration. But it would have been politically risky to fire Moynihan outright, since he had gained a wide following. The Reston column was a much neater solution.

Other officials less artful than Kissinger have been able to fool Reston. On August 10, 1973, Reston gushed about a press conference held by Vice President Spiro Agnew, in which Agnew passionately denied charges of peddling influence and accepting bribes. As usual, Reston attributed the expressed views to the air, rather than to himself: ". . . even without knowing the facts in Agnew's case, the feeling after his press conference was very much in his favor—in fact, that finally in this town somebody in power had talked up with candor and passion, and taken the risk of telling the truth." As we now know, this last risk was one Agnew did not take that day. Only two months later he pleaded *nolo contendere* to bribery charges, and resigned his office.

It appears that Reston has fallen into that oldest of journalistic traps—refraining from criticizing those in positions of power or influence in order to preserve his access. All journalists have to decide whether it's more important to get exclusives from those in a position to give them, or to maintain the freedom to say anything they believe. Columnists face the dilemma more keenly than other journalists, since they are freer to criticize, and yet more likely to be courted by the great. A muckraker like I. F. Stone, for example, lacks the high-level sources because he so lustily castigates those in power. But a bulletin board like Reston has access to those in power in "Washington," in part because he can be trusted not to make them look bad. Certainly Reston would have no trouble getting his phone calls returned even if he made a habit of flogging top officials, since no one in Washington would dare to ignore the *New York Times*. But he might not get the juicy tidbits, the behind-the-scenes peeks, or the exclusive interviews.

Reston himself practically concedes as much, though not in quite the same terms. "If you spend your life as a hatchet man—and there's something to be said for that—then eventually you find that everybody's out to lunch when you call," he says. "You're left with only your own opinion. I wouldn't like that, because my own opinions aren't that good."

The problem isn't just that Reston is too cautious about preserving his good relations with top sources. ("I've never held something out of the column in order to keep from losing a source," he says.) He's too much a gentleman to even wish to criticize the sort of people he relies on for information. It's hard to imagine Reston consciously refraining from severe criticism in order to avoid alienating someone important, because it's hard to imagine Reston ever feeling strongly enough to want to criticize severely. It's not in the nature of the beast. Reston never thinks things are really all that bad.

Reston is no critic of the powers that be precisely because he thinks we're all on the same side, with the same fundamental interests. That's why Reston didn't inform his readers that the US was flying U-2 reconnaissance planes over the Soviet Union until one was shot down in 1960, even though he had known about it for more than a year. That's why Reston so often writes columns like the one that appeared on April 2, when he wrote of President Carter: "He has made many mistakes along the way in this Iranian crisis, but at this particular moment, he is being very cautious, under extreme international and political pressure, and the feeling in this corner is that he deserves more support than he's getting." And that's why Reston worries so that the press "is determined, for good reasons, to expose the weakness and corruption of government at all levels, but in the process tends to dramatize the worst in everything and everybody." Reston, by contrast, likes to stress the best traits in everyone, even if it means obscuring their very real—and more pressing—flaws and mistakes.

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But the softness of Reston's columns, especially in recent years, goes beyond mere excess of optimism and amiability. It's no longer clear that he even pays much attention to the words he writes. In November 1975 he complained that Ronald Reagan's presidential candidacy "is taken so seriously . . . by the President." Then a month later, he revealed that President Ford "is said to be worried now [about Reagan] for the first time." Often Reston simply fills space with meaningless jabber. Take for example his latest Kissinger column, quoted above. Having noted Kissinger's disparaging assessment of Carter's diplomatic record, Reston went on to say: "This is the most serious indictment heard from Kissinger about any Administration in recent years." Now a columnist who had troubled to think about what he was writing would have realized that Kissinger would not be likely to criticize the foreign policy of the two administrations that preceded Carter's, since he created it. (And of course before 1969, Professor Kissinger did not have Reston's ear.) A couple of weeks ago, Reston praised President Sadat of Egypt for having "the honor of the mind." Honor of the mind? What can this be? How is it different from honor of the soul, honor of the body? It's a nice, portentous phrase, but when examined it yields no meaning: it is pure nonsense, in the strictest sense of the word.

Or take a recent column based on a conversation with Edward Kennedy, in which Reston coaxed out of Kennedy remarks like this: "'This country is a restless giant,' he says, 'but I believe it is eager to listen to the different views of the candidates and will respond.'" And this: "My central impression of the last few weeks of campaigning is that the people really want to be part of resolving the issues that divide them. They're deeply concerned and looking for leadership." Reston quotes lines like these without ever pausing to examine them. Kennedy of course was saying nothing newsworthy, nothing in fact even meaningful. So what purpose is served by his private interview with the nation's most distinguished journalist? If Reston knows when a politician is telling him something important and when his subject is merely making amiable noise, he gives no sign of it. In *his* audience with Reston, Helmut Schmidt was no less bold than Kennedy: "there was a need, he conceded, for closer consultation on East-West problems and for a new effort to develop a longer-range strategy and philosophy among the Western allies." What did Reston expect Schmidt to say (or "concede")? That there was a need for less consultation on East-West problems, or for no effort to develop a longer-range strategy? As a matter of fact, *that* would be a real scoop.

One of Reston's favorite crutches is the call for a National Debate on Important Issues. In January he wrote that "what we need now is an honest accounting of the state of the Union, followed by a serious debate in the Congress about where the nation stands at the beginning of the 1980s." Only a few days before he had asked, "Who is responsible for our present predicament—the president, the Congress or both?" And he noted with approval, "Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York has suggested that these questions be debated at length in the coming session of Congress." The previous week Reston had praised Kissinger for saying "It is time for a carefully considered nonpartisan effort to reach a consensus on how to contain Soviet power in the Near and Middle East." Once in a while he will combine this with another favorite theme, as when he wrote that his airy voices "believe the 'present danger' lies more in the threat of inflation and the erosion of confidence in the American dollar and the control of the American economy [than in the Soviet threat]. This is worthy of a 'great debate' in Congress." This fondness of Reston's is not new, apparently. Once it annoyed even Arthur Krock. After one 1958 Reston column praised Adlai Stevenson for calling for a committee of experts to make plans for the recovery of the Western economies, Krock complained, "The files already are bulging with a dozen such formulations by 'committees of experts.'"

What is the point of suggestions like these? Does Reston really think a national debate on any of these matters will contribute much to anything? It's doubtful. More likely he simply doesn't have an opinion but feels obliged to take note that issues like these are being discussed. Or perhaps he does have an opinion but doesn't want to express it forthrightly. In any case, proposing national debates and discussions is hardly a function worthy of the most influential job in print journalism.

Close and regular reading of his columns leads to the conclusion that James Reston simply has nothing to say. He has no ideas, and only the vaguest opinions, which means he has no way of separating the wheat from the chaff. "I'm an economic and financial idiot," he cheerfully admits, "but I can go and see the chairman of the Federal Reserve, the Treasury Secretary, Henry Reuss, Ed Muskie, and what I do is report." But since he knows very little about the subject, Reston cannot distinguish between what is sound and what is just noise. Consequently he ends up quoting a lot of nonsense from important people, either because he doesn't realize it's nonsense or because he thinks it doesn't matter. And since people like that can get away with spouting nonsense, so can Reston. If he tosses off some phrase like "honor of the mind" or calls for a national debate on some issue, people assume that he's actually said something, when in fact he's only obscured his dearth of ideas. That dearth of ideas is precisely what keeps him in business, because if he had any ideas he wouldn't be nearly so valuable to people in power, or to newspaper editors who like their columnists thoughtful but not controversial, or to readers who like to be carried along on meaningless profundities and soothing reassurances. And if it weren't for people like that, James Reston wouldn't be the premier journalist of the age.

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Rosi and Roseland

It's getting a bit late to worry about Francesco Rosi. He's been directing since 1958, and the balance in him of virtues and faults, too equal to keep him from first-class work, hasn't yet tipped favorably. If anything, the reverse.

Rosi is Neapolitan, "political," and marks his films with a humane, cursive gravity. He's concerned with the well-being of his countrymen, with the plots and complots that oppress them; his camera moves to disclose and unravel the conspiracies against justice, glides succinctly and discreetly, in such films as *The Mattei Affair* (about oil) and *Lucky Luciano* (about the Mafia). His early and, I think, best film, *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962), was a "ballad" about the Sicilian bandit as an emblem of protest, and many of its images are incised in memory—the massacre at the communist rally, the naked corpse of Giuliano packed in ice against the Sicilian summer. (And let's not forget that the cinematographer who perfected those images was the late Gianni Di Venanzo, dead at 46, an inadequately recognized force in the postwar Italian film rebirth.) But in that work and later ones, Rosi's structure has been weak, his drama flabby. He relies on texture to do almost everything for him, and it doesn't. (It's odd, this failing, because he began as assistant to Luchino Visconti whose dramatic sense leaned the other way, to the florid. Has Rosi been overreacting to Visconti all through his own career?)

Now Rosi has filmed a subject that, I'd guess, he has had in mind for a long time, but he hasn't reexamined it in the light of lapsed time, with enough rigor. One of the most famous of postwar Italian books was Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*. (The film truncates the title to *Eboli*.) Levi was a physician and painter, an anti-Fascist who in the 1930s had been exiled from Rome to Lucania in southern Italy along with other "politicals" and who wrote about the experience 10 years later. The story is not of Levi's sufferings, for in any real sense he didn't suffer. When we think of political dissidents under Hitler and Stalin in those years, Levi and his fellow anti-Fascists seem just to be on faintly spartan holidays in an exquisite countryside.

However, not much claim is made about his suffering. His real subject is the Lucanian peasantry, his countrymen whose lives were straitened in every regard. But they and their villages strike us differently today. When Gian Maria Volonté, as Levi, speaks on the soundtrack about the desolation, the misery, the abandonment of these people, I thought that he ought to be glad he never saw the South Bronx or many parts of Harlem. More: I saw *Eboli* just after a documentary on ABC-TV about Cambodia today.

Not that misery must be the most miserable in our experience in order to be moving. The life of a Lucanian peasant even now, I'm sure, is harder than most of us will ever know (although the worst we actually see here are some superstitions about illness). Compare *Eboli* only with Olmi's *Tree of the Wooden Clogs*. Rosi's film is the notebook of a tourist, compassionate but safe. Olmi's film fell sadly short of success, but we lived with the peasants, were surrounded by the hardness of their lives. Levi was a visitor, judging by the difference between Lucanian life and Rome. Olmi never patronized his people; Levi, as drawn by Rosi, can't quite escape the scent of tourism.

And the tour plods, episode after episode, an invertebrate travelogue. Rosi attempts to give it a semi-spine with a (non-sexual) relationship between Levi and his housekeeper. Irene Papas fills the part with her dark juices, but she simply appears for a while, then disappears. The episode is one more brick not cemented into place. Volonté, saturnine and strong, does what he can as Levi, but there's not enough for him to do.

Always Rosi wants to cut against conventional filmmaking, which is admirable, but all that he replaces conventional structure with is flaccidness. That's often been true of him, and here it's worse because he hasn't seen what his material looks like today. Levi's book is generally credited with being in the van of postwar Italian social realism. That—in the days when Liberation still hung in the air, the days when presumably Rosi first read and loved the book—was a while ago.

Has any sociologist investigated the effect of Hollywood on life in California outside the film world? The religious and health and sexual cults that, even earlier than Aldous Huxley and Evelyn Waugh, made "Californian" a sufficiently precise adjective—all these, even when they concern people outside the movies, seem to have an atmospheric connection with the exaggerations and hysteria of Hollywood. No place on

Films Worth Seeing

Best Boy. Don't be put off by this documentary's subject—a middle-aged man mentally retarded since birth. Ira Wohl has made this picture about his cousin—and his wonderful aunt—with reticence and love.

Coal Miner's Daughter. Sissy Spacek agreeably homespun as Loretta Lynn—and Spacek sings the songs herself, pleasantly. The first half is graphic drama of family life in Appalachian poverty; the second half declines into trite martyrdom by success.

The Left-Handed Woman. Peter Handke joins the select company of fine writers who are fine directors. He wrote the screenplay before he wrote the novel, and with the ideal casting of Edith Clever in the title role, he has made it into a "moment" of exquisite, charged silence.

The Trials of Alger Hiss. John Lowenthal's 166-minute documentary weaves newsreels with present-day interviews, attempting to present an objective summary of the case. A little less would have been more, but it's intelligent.

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earth (at last report) is free of foolishness, but can one imagine those cults in Vermont? Tropical climate, which was a chief reason for the film industry's move to Hollywood around 1910, breeds more than luxuriant flora. No doubt Florida has what might be called climatic nuts, nurtured by warmth, but if there are as many in Florida as in sunny Cal., they don't get the same press, because Hollywood has conditioned the press to look westward for wackiness.

So, although *Serial* is set in San Francisco and Marin County, 300 miles north of Movieland, it seems a spinoff of Hollywood life. The film, adapted from Cyra McFadden's novel, is a satire: its subjects are open marriages, opening marriages, hippie weddings, vegetarianism, orgies, pseudo-psychoanalytical jargon, Moonies, and more. The trouble is that, after you've read that list, you feel that you've seen the film. The subjects are self-satirical: no one really needs to do much about them. Only in brilliant hands could they be "improved" upon, and nobody connected with this film is even outstandingly bright, let alone glistening.

The formula for this kind of story requires a sane person amidst the nuts, a vicar for the audience—a George Burns amidst a lot of Gracie Allens—patiently demurring, patiently asking the questions we want to ask. This is Martin Mull, known from TV, moderately good as a moderately patient husband and father. Tuesday Weld, who is losing her pertness, is the wife who, we well know, will see the error of her faddish ways in time to help reclaim their daughter from a religious cult. A few lines get mild chuckles, but that's statistically inevitable in a film that keeps straining so long to amuse. One depressing inevitability in this satire of reality is the abandonment of reality for movie baloney—an invasion of the cult headquarters by a motorcycle gang on their motorcycles, an explicit confession of the bankruptcy that's been implicit up to then.

Only one aspect of the film is genuinely interesting. The interiors of most of the Marin County homes we see, designed by Bill Sandell, are invitingly lush. I had my own ideas about the income level of these people, and I came most widely awake when, at one point, Mull says his income is $33,000 a year. In that home? With that wife and daughter, those clothes, and so on? What year was *that*?

Reconsideration.

On 'Desperate Characters'

by Irving Howe

Somewhere in his journals André Gide speaks caustically about writers characterized by "a passion for the approximate." Had he lived to read *Desperate Characters*, he might have spoken admiringly about "a passion for the exact." Since it first appeared in 1970, Paula Fox's book has won a steadily increasing public that, in a time of pop confession and sensationalist junk, values her austere discipline of craft. And now the book is available again, one of those small triumphs of literary resurrection that can only bring pleasure.

Desperate Characters takes its place in a major American tradition, the line of the short novel exemplified by *Billy Budd, The Great Gatsby, Miss Lonelyhearts*, and *Seize the Day*. When we think of American literature in its distinctive "Americanness," what first come to mind are those sprawling "open forms" of *Moby Dick* and *Leaves of Grass*, where an expansiveness of language and spirit becomes an organizing principle. But there is another tradition, at least as distinguished, in which everything—action, form, language—is fiercely compressed, and often dark-grained as well.

As a distinct genre, the short novel moves according to a rhythm of its own, setting in motion a single line of action, less complex than the full-scale novel but decidedly more so than the short story, with its brief flaring incident. The short novel moves rapidly toward a moment of testing, in which its characters achieve something like a full lucidity. There is not much space for accumulation of counter-instances: it is the trajectory of action that counts, sometimes with a semi-allegorical shadow of meaning. In reading a short novel we're often aware of the writer's strong executive hand, molding and shaping, commanding our attention to niceties of design. All this, as in the playing of sonatas, makes for a stress upon virtuosity; indeed, the sense of performance is crucial to this genre, a way of realizing its intentions and significance.

Desperate Characters obeys in general these requirements of the short novel, but obeys them, of course, in accord with the special talent, the high workmanship, of Paula Fox. Consider the opening paragraph: a brightly colored

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Irving Howe is author, with Kenneth Libo, of *How We Lived: A Documentary History of Immigrant Jews in America, 1880-1930* (Richard Marek). This essay, ©1980 by Irving Howe, reprinted by permission of David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., will appear as the afterword to *Desperate Characters* by Paula Fox, to be published next month.

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picture of an elegant middle-class dining room that speaks of taste and cultivation, and thereby perhaps also of anxiety. It is a room in which things are just a little too neat, as if to prepare us for the life of the Bentwoods, who aspire to a quantity of neatness. Put Matisse in Brooklyn Heights and he might paint a scene like this, though he would add a touch of pleasing disorder that would mark his genius. At the end of the book there is a moment of violence, or violent frustration, when Otto Bentwood picks up a bottle of ink, hurls it against the wall, and then, with his wife, Sophie, watches "the ink running down to the floor in black lines." Another sharply etched picture (I fancy it as a Franz Kline; other readers will harbor other fantasies). This picture, as a hieroglyphic of doom, brackets a book that, throughout, is vibrant with sensory immediacy, pictorial strength. There are no smudged approximations here; all is named exactly, evoked precisely, the place, the look, the smell, the aura. Some of Fox's characters may have gone a little dead inside, but the world in which they move is rendered with a tensed energy, color, and threat.

The overarching line of incident in this book seems at first glance small-scaled, perhaps even trivial: a cultivated woman, Sophie Bentwood, is bitten by a cat and fears it may be rabid, then she and her husband go to the hospital, then they capture the cat, etc. To make this the outer action of a novel is to take a large risk: well taken, well rewarded. Everything moves along the curve of this action, except perhaps chapter eight, in which Sophie visits her friend Claire in Manhattan. There she listens to the high-comedy bitching of Claire's ex-husband, the aging New York intellectual Leon (I know *him*!). Why this seeming digression? Because the chapter, coming about midway, serves as comic relief; because it provides that rest before climax all dramatists know they must have; but most of all, because it yields, through the mild squalor yet the still-pulsing affections of Claire and Leon, a telling contrast to the over-disciplined style of the Bentwoods.

Otherwise, the book moves straight toward its climax, the vandalism of the Bentwood summer home, and then to a half-repose in the final chapter, consisting of tentative reflection and renewed anxiety. There is a danger in compressing a narrative so fiercely, the danger that we will lose the aura of spontaneity that larger and looser fictions can yield. Paula Fox seems aware of this danger and tries to ease it by inserting bits of seemingly gratuitous but actually weighted incident and dumb show: the interchange between Sophie and the saleswoman, an essentially New York experience; the encounter between Sophie and the old man on the street who, in exchange for a smile, bows to her; the sour conversation about earphones in the French theater.

What Paula Fox is writing about in *Desperate Characters* seems to me finally the nature of civilization at this historical moment, its fragility and its costs. Yet she hangs the whole thing—her essential fable—on the bite of a cat. Why not? That bite comes to signify

photo of Paula Fox by Jerry Bauer

Sophie's "undignified confrontation with mortality," but still more, everything in our experience that we cannot subdue through will or evade through Otto's strategies of withdrawal. Pat a stray cat on its back and you may bring on a sequence of fear, pain, hysteria. *Anything* you do has its potential of danger. Yet try to keep yourself from such gestures, and you may be dead before you die. That wretched alley cat, so wonderful a "character," embodies the hovering malice that lies just beneath the skin of nature but also all the menace of the streets of New York. This mangy little beast has an energy that warrants moral attention. It is shockingly alive, perhaps more than any other living creature in this novel; it squirms and squeals when captured. Perhaps it even reveals something, through a very faint parallel that I think I see between its opening bite and the ending of chapter 12, about the nature of marriage—though finally this book takes marriage to be an institution of desperate worth.

The strength of *Desperate Characters* lies in its prose, which we should see not as some autonomous beauty or pretty decoration, but sentence by lapidary sentence as the realization of a mind committed to the hardness of its own truth. Except for perhaps a half-dozen sentences scattered through the book that strike one as needlessly sententious, the prose moves in a clipped beat, a lean discipline, austere and proud in its exactitude. In love Sophie grows "arrowy"—how wonderful a word, to suggest the experience of love's rightness and concentration! Her lover gone, Sophie "put herself to sleep again nursing memories of [him], like an old crone with a bit of rag for a baby." The street on which the Bentwoods live takes on "at night . . . a quiet earnest look as though it were continuing to try to improve itself in the dark." And in a more familiar comic vein, the old intellectual Leon talks about his son:

> 'It is his belief that history began in 1948, the year of his birth. I have tried to dissuade him of this delusion, but my knowledge is no match for his ignorance. At the very hint of an idea from me, he smiles at me as gently as though I were eternally damned. He wears a rubber band around his hair to keep it out of his eyes when he studies the wall in front of him, where his visions arise. . . .'

The characters Fox writes about are the urban people we know, the kind likely to read this book: cultivated, sensitive, nervous, troubled about maintaining social conscience in a time of threat. But there is no sign I can see that Fox aligns herself in any small partisan spirit with either Sophie or Otto. This is a novel about the strains and costs of marriage, but since it's fashionable these days to come down heavily on the strains and costs, I would add that it is also about the rewards that sometimes, unexpectedly, also follow. Otto is too rigid, Sophie too unformed. Otto wants to keep himself apart from the contingencies of life, Sophie wants to be sensitive to the traumas of the oppressed, the pathology of the decayed. A crucial exchange occurs at one point:

> 'I wouldn't mind being shot in a revolution, or having my home burned' [says Otto].
>
> She laughed wildly. 'You wouldn't *mind* being shot!' she cried.
>
> 'There'd be some purpose to it,' he said stubbornly. . . . '*This* [the vandalizing of the summer house] is meaningless. It doesn't represent an idea. It is primitive, the void . . .'
>
> 'Maybe it's in a language you don't speak—'

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'Are you defending pigs who shit in your fireplace!' he demanded furiously.

The conversation ends in a deadlock, which is right, for the voices are evenly balanced, each with its approximation of truth, and Paula Fox does not rush in with one of her own. Sophie appears to be speaking for a wider humaneness, a wish to make out the meaning of the seemingly meaningless, and I suppose that most readers will sympathize with her. Yet Otto's response, as the underdog in this dialogue, needs to be taken seriously: he is saying that the "language you don't speak" must be judged not only for its possible twisted intent, as a gesture of frustration, but also for what it manifestly does say, as a gesture of barbarism.

Fox is too shrewd a writer to let these characters settle into a rigid set piece of identity. (In real life, they might.) At one crucial moment they shift roles, as husbands and wives sometimes do, and it is Otto who brings to bear a little skepticism on their fears of engulfment:

'Don't you know [says Sophie] you can't get a doctor any more? Don't you know this country is falling apart?'

'Just because you can't get a doctor on Friday evening does not mean this country is falling apart.'

Pressed by Sophie to explain his suspicions of the black man who has conned them out of 11 dollars, Otto is reasonable enough to admit it may only be his prejudice. And at another critical moment, when they enter the hospital emergency room and the fastidious Sophie wants to back away, Otto tells her: "Put up with it! . . . Put up with it! . . . Everyone else does." I find this intensely moving, because it speaks for an order of truth, though it comes from a character we are scarcely persuaded to love. A good novelist always brings to characters a final justice, and here, unmistakably, it is.

For Otto is the triumph of this novel. Sophie in her charm and cherished vulnerability, Sophie in her well-mannered, middle-aged sexuality, engages one immediately. What else? But Otto is an original. Terribly complicated, he would be easy to pillory or dismiss or mock, none of which Paula Fox does. His attitudes are of a kind many readers will find unsympathetic; he represents a conservative temperament rather more than conservative opinions; he wants to draw a tight, modest circle of order in his life. But it also becomes clear that he is a man who has his humanities, he is decent and capable of unspectacular sympathy and wide reflection, surely more than his wife credits or we at first suspect. When Sophie cries out to him, "Be a little *uncertain*," we applaud. But having come to know Otto through act and speech, we suspect that he will sooner or later return to Sophie's injunction, mulling it over in his joyless way and acknowledging a certain justice to it. Our approval or disapproval of Otto barely matters once we take the measure of his suffering and endurance.

I said earlier that *Desperate Characters* is a book about civilization, its fragility and costs—I should add that, in its hard way, it is also about injustice. It captures, to some extent, a mood of the late 1960s, the anxiety of cultivated liberated people that "everything is going to hell" and the threatening hordes are at the gate. Those who felt this were far from right, yet not entirely wrong, either; and it is the complicatedness, perhaps even the hopelessness, of the Bentwoods' responses, shown as settling into no easy formulas of acceptance or rejection, that may be one reason for Paula Fox's severity of tone. Some readers have spoken of that tone as one of resignation, but I would call it a gritty stoicism, a determination to fight for one's morale. The civilization depicted here is flawed, and without sufficient joy or energy. But it *is* a civilization, and even with its quotient of middle-class guilt and failure, it embodies the achievement of generations in giving us whatever it is we have.

In the final chapter Sophie comes upon a passage in a book that Otto has been reading: "She caught a reference to antipopery riots, then: 'Strings of boys of fourteen were hung up in a row to vindicate the law. . . . '*To vindicate the law*,' had been underlined twice."

Sophie thinks: "There was no end to it." No end to what? Paula Fox does not tell us but surely we know: there is no end to the outrages of history, no end to suffering and confusion, no end to the terrible jousting between those who would speak for freedom and those who believe they speak for order. A few paragraphs later Sophie continues her meditation:

How had Otto felt, reading those lines sometime during the night? Had the hanging of young boys appalled him? But why had he underlined the words? Did he mean that the horror of law is that it must be vindicated? Or had he thought of himself, of his own longing for order? Or was the double line an expression of irony? Or did he think law was only another *form* of that same brute impulse

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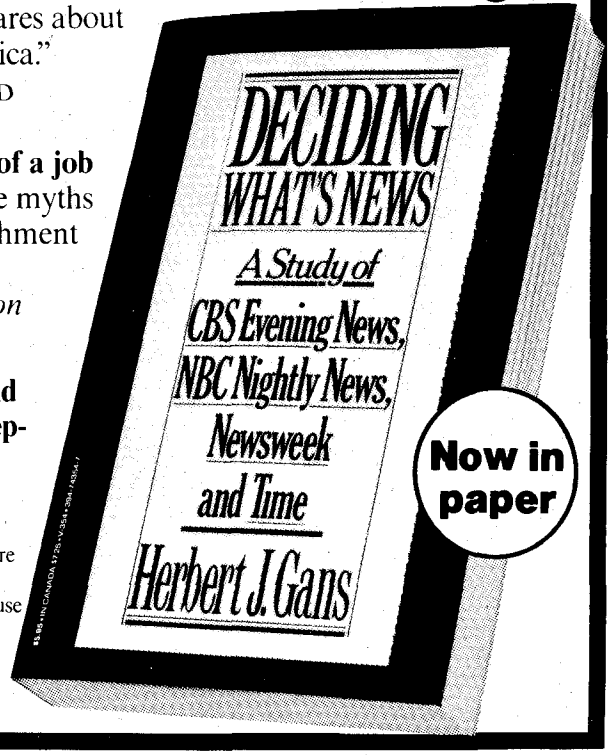

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which it was directed toward restraining? They had been married for fifteen years. What did she know of what he thought? She knew him in the density of their life together, not outside it.

It is a remarkable passage, a meditation of questioning. It makes one wonder whether somewhere in the back of her mind Paula Fox was thinking of Melville's *Billy Budd*, where the idea of *forms* is also puzzlingly central. The questions Sophie asks here might easily be asked about Captain Vere, so thoroughly do they seem to echo Melville's wonderings about form and spontaneity, order and freedom. Unanswered and perhaps unanswerable, these questions provide the climax to a story that had begun—with the bite of a cat.

After 15 years of marriage, Sophie still does not quite know what Otto meant by underlining those words; perhaps Otto didn't know either. For it is hard, it is very hard to know. And then comes the sentence that shows the hand of the true novelist: "She knew him in the density of their life together, not outside it." Idle minds may suppose this testifies to the failure of a marriage or the falsities of civilization: idle minds will be wrong.

Grueling and brilliant, *Desperate Characters* tells us part, only part, of how we live now. But make no mistake: it tells us that we do live.

The Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli

(Random House; $15)

This book consists of letters from and to Scott Fitzgerald that did not appear in three earlier collections. The letters here, with some exceptions, are not the most eloquent or the most revealing; Andrew Turnbull had the pick of these when compiling *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (1963). A selection of correspondence with Maxwell Perkins and with Scott's literary agent, Harold Ober, went into *Dear Scott/Dear Max* (1971) and *As Ever, Scott Fitz* (1972). The new book does include, however, some important items that had been printed in studies of Fitzgerald and his contemporaries: for example, in Nancy Milford's moving biography of his wife, *Zelda* (1970), or in Bruccoli's *Scott and Ernest* (1978); here they are brought together in chronological order.

Some items in *The Correspondence* are extremely useful to anyone who is trying to disentangle the Fitzgerald story. This is especially true of those bearing on Scott's relations with his wife and her psychiatrists. The best of the new items is Zelda's anguished recapitulation of their life together, a 42-page (in manuscript) letter written from her Swiss sanitarium; here as elsewhere Bruccoli's footnotes identify the many persons mentioned. There are other letters that have only recently become available; most of them deal with business matters, or are simply pleas for money, but some of them cast new light on affairs of the heart. Letters to Scott from his friends, including many from John Peale Bishop, Ring Lardner, and the two candid but warmhearted Murphys help to explain what he was talking about. A principal value of the collection is to set Scott and Zelda firmly in their world, with its people, its interiors, and its daily preoccupations.

But one can't help asking, "Why another book, and a big one, compiled from Fitzgerald's posthumous papers?" My shelves are bending with such books already. Matthew J. Bruccoli, who also edits the *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual*, has himself produced more than a dozen of them. It is true that, as Bruccoli says, "The writer who died 'forgotten' in 1940 is the most fully documented American author of this century. . . . He made everyone else's work possible by preserving the evidence." But what is the charm that keeps Bruccoli and others going back to that evidence—and keeps people reading the volumes that are published year after year?

I suppose the answer is that Fitzgerald and his wife have become an American legend, of the sort that in earlier ages would have been embellished by scops and bards. Always there would have been music in the air. Youths and maidens, while they listened, would have imagined themselves as the hero or the heroine: the boy who became famous at 24 and "the girl of his dreams." One keeps falling into clichés—but isn't this a mark of legends, that their archetypes always harden into stereotypes?

What happened then in this particular romance? Boy lived with girl in an enchanted world; they spent without reckoning because their needs were supplied by what Scott called "great filling stations full of money"; and gradually the enchantment wore away. Girl went off to a series of sanitariums; boy worked desperately to pay the accumulated bills; but he was now an alcoholic, and the filling stations were closed for the decade. They lived on for a time (Scott for 10 years, Zelda longer) in an effort to recapture the magical past, without suspecting that their lives would some day be haloed with retrospective glory. Or did they suspect it? Scott frequently and Zelda at moments acted as if they regarded themselves as figures in a ritual drama, one that would mirror an age in which "success" and "failure" were mystical values for Americans.

This unwritten drama is more compelling than any of the plots that Fitzgerald laboriously found for his novels (though he had approached it in *Tender Is the Night*). For all his genius in evoking moods and atmospheres, he always had trouble with the story line. Often he tried to solve the problem by overcomplication, and one notes that many of his magazine stories have plot enough, in each case, for a medium-length novel. During the Hollywood years his trouble with plots was a mark against him—and this apart from his drinking, which would have been easier for the studio to forgive if his scenarios had worked. But meanwhile, more than a little consciously, he was living out the plot of a novel in which one scene followed another by inevitable steps and every detail rang true. Mightn't that be the essential charm of the Fitzgerald papers for biographers, critics, and scholars, those modern scops and bards? Isn't each of them trying to present, in each new book, some undiscovered aspect of the ritual drama and American tragedy that was Fitzgerald's life?

The aspect most sharply revealed in this new volume is by no means an undiscovered one, but it has often been underemphasized. Briefly it is the extent to which the Fitzgerald story—whether lived or turned by him into fiction—was a collaboration between Scott and Zelda. It is her part in the fiction that is widely neglected. Not only was she the Fitzgerald heroine—and he found it

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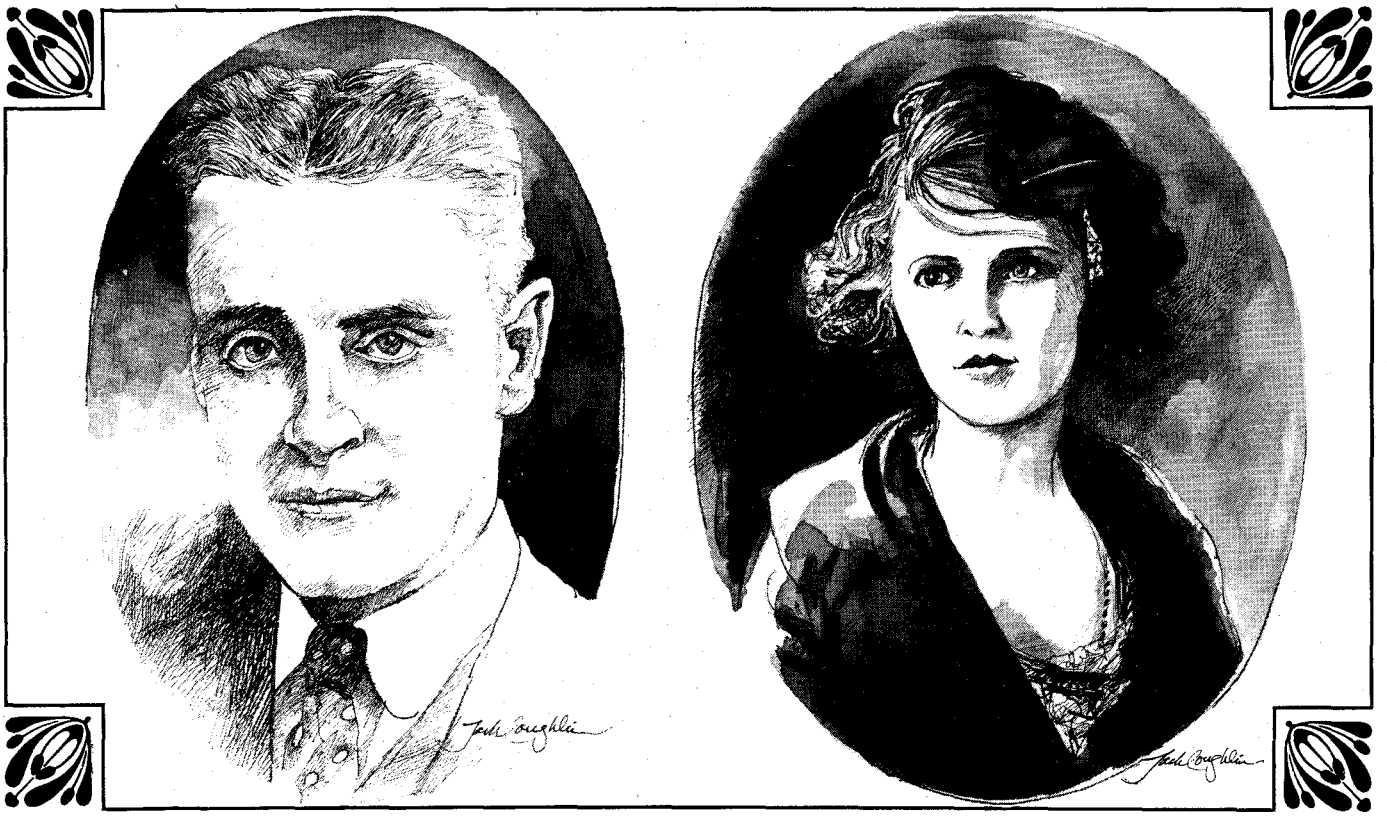

difficult to create another after her breakdown in 1930—not only did she enrich their common stock of material, but also she contributed to his style by her use of hallucinated language based on her intense perceptions. "Rewrite from mood" is an injunction to himself penciled in the margin of several manuscripts now in the Princeton library. Long after reading the injunction I decided what it really meant: that the passage was to be rewritten in the metaphorical terms into which Zelda fell naturally, but which Scott could achieve only by making an effort.

Here is an example, not from *The Correspondence*, but from the beginning of "A Millionaire's Girl," a story that Zelda wrote unaided from their joint stock of situations. Scott made revisions in proof and signed the story, so that it would bring a higher price from the *Saturday Evening Post*:

> Twilights were wonderful just after the war. They hung above New York like indigo wash, forming themselves from asphalt dust and sooty shadows under the cornices and limp gusts of air exhaled from closing windows, to hang above the streets with all the mystery of white fog rising from a swamp. . . . Through the gloom people went to tea. On all the corners round the Plaza Hotel, girls in short squirrel coats and hats like babies' velvet bathtubs waited for the changing traffic to be suctioned up by the revolving doors of the fashionable grill.

A few lines below one reads the mysterious statement: "It was always tea-time or late at night." Why? After hearing tales from their friends, I guessed the reason: it was because Scott and Zelda got stoned at tea-time and didn't come back to the world until late at night. They were living too fast to keep up with themselves. Nevertheless Scott worked hard at his writing in the mornings and sometimes for days on end. Zelda hadn't that discipline, or any other, but in one way she preserved a moral superiority over Scott. That was because she had less self-consciousness; most of the time she simply acted where Scott saw himself acting; she did not think of consequences. It was Scott, the spoiled priest, who believed in rewards and punishments.

There were more punishments than rewards during his last years in Hollywood. Money, money was the subject of his letters, to an extent that one wouldn't have realized from reading previous collections, which omitted his more abject pleas. If only he had money to pay the psychiatrists, to put Scottie through school and Vassar, to buy time for writing another novel. . . . Zelda the spendthrift spoke less of money in her letters from sanitariums; she was learning to do without it. Heartbreakingly she kept evoking the past. "O my darling," she wrote from North Carolina in the winter of 1937—

> That's what we said on the softness of that expansive Alabama night a long time ago when you invited me to dine and I had never dined before but had always just 'had supper.' The General was away. The night was soft and gray and the trees were feathery in the lamplight and the dim recesses of the pine forest were fragrant with the past, and you said you would come back from no matter where you are. So I said and I will be here waiting. I didn't quite believe it then, but now I do.

Scott did come back from the coast on several occasions. If Zelda had earned a reprieve from the sanitarium, they would go on a trip together, but each of these was disastrous. Scott would drink suicidally and Zelda, back in her refuge, would sometimes lapse into catatonia. In April 1938 Scott wrote to her psychiatrist:

> . . . each time that I see her something happens to me that makes me the worst person for her rather than the best, but a part of me will always pity her with a sort of deep ache that is never absent from my mind for more than a few hours: an ache for the beautiful child that I loved and with whom I was happy as I shall never be again.

It is hardly a wonder that scholars, no less romantic than the rest of us, keep going back to the Fitzgerald papers.

Malcolm Cowley

Malcolm Cowley, former literary editor of *The New Republic*, is author of *The Dream of the Golden Mountains: Remembering the 1930s* (Viking).

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Kennedy and Roosevelt: The Uneasy Alliance
by Michael R. Beschloss
(W. W. Norton; $14.95)

History has its special ironies. Movements of seeming importance in their own day fall into obscurity at a later time. Men of limited consequence to their contemporaries gain center stage in future years. Joseph P. Kennedy illustrates the point. Head of the Securities and Exchange Commission for 15 months in 1934-35, chairman of the Maritime Commission for much of 1937, and ambassador to Britain from early 1938 to the end of 1940, Kennedy was a secondary figure in the New Deal years. But the legacy of the 20th-century political dynasty fashioned by three of his sons has elevated the senior Kennedy into a "founding father" and made him the focus of several books.

The latest in this series is a volume by Michael R. Beschloss, a talented young graduate student at Harvard, who began this study as a senior thesis. Based on a wide array of manuscript sources, including a portion of Kennedy's papers, particularly his unpublished diplomatic memoir, Beschloss has written a lively, often amusing account. "Joe, would you mind taking your pants down?" the president asked Kennedy during a visit to the Oval Office in the fall of 1937. After ascertaining that he had heard correctly, Kennedy sheepishly complied. "You are just about the most bowlegged man I have ever seen," FDR observed. "Don't you know that the ambassador to the Court of St. James has to go through an induction ceremony in which he wears knee breeches and silk stockings? . . . When photos of our new ambassador appear all over the world, we'll be a laughing stock." Roosevelt gave him the job anyway.

Beschloss's book adds some fresh detail to our knowledge of Kennedy's public life and is particularly good on his ambassadorial career. Beschloss effectively describes Kennedy's close identification with the British appeasement policy in 1938; his split with the Chamberlain and Churchill governments in 1939-40 over their decision to fight rather than continue appeasing Berlin; and his differences with FDR throughout his ambassadorial term. By November 1940 he and Roosevelt could no longer discuss foreign affairs rationally. A 10-minute meeting at Hyde Park, in which Kennedy predicted Britain's defeat and an authoritarian world to which the United States would have to adjust, evoked the president's wrath. "I never want to see that son of a bitch again as long as I live," he told Eleanor. "Take his resignation and get him out of here!" Kennedy reciprocated Roosevelt's feeling. "What are you doing campaigning for that crippled son of a bitch that killed my son Joe?" Kennedy asked Harry Truman in 1944. "If you say another word about Roosevelt, I'm going to throw you out that window," Truman replied.

For all its merits, Beschloss's book offers a somewhat distorted picture of Kennedy. In placing Kennedy on an equal level with Roosevelt—"Joseph Kennedy and Franklin Roosevelt were the central figures of the two greatest American dynasties of this century," advertising copy for the book declares—Beschloss overstates Kennedy's importance.

Roosevelt sent Kennedy to London, Beschloss believes, principally because of the influence he could exert. The talent for negotiation he had displayed at the Securities and Maritime commissions would make him a formidable representative in Anglo-American trade talks, and arrangements made by Kennedy for aid to Britain in case of war "would help to overcome the resistance of the anti-British, isolationist Catholic population of the Northeast." These considerations may have influenced Roosevelt, but of greater and more immediate importance was his wish to have someone in London who would not identify with the British government's appeasement policy. Kennedy's failure to play that part greatly disappointed FDR. "Who would have thought that the English could take into camp a red-headed Irishman?" the president later complained. Focusing chiefly on Kennedy and convinced of his importance as a molder of events during the Roosevelt years, Beschloss misses the central reason for Kennedy's assignment to London—to act as an instrument of presidential policy by keeping his distance from the British government and providing critical estimates of the appeasement policy. Kennedy, Rexford Tugwell believed, was "one of the people Roosevelt knew how to use without allowing them more scope than was appropriate to his intentions."

The 1940 presidential campaign is another case in point. Beschloss depicts Kennedy as holding Franklin Roosevelt's fate in his hands. When the British arrested an American embassy employee for stealing confidential documents, Kennedy had the choice of returning the man for trial in the United States or of waiving his diplomatic immunity and allowing the British to try him. An American trial would have raised a public furor over FDR's "private machinations in Europe" and "might have eliminated any chances of a third term for the President and made it nearly impossible for him to move public opinion so swiftly toward aid to the Allies." Kennedy chose a British trial "conducted under a cloak of wartime secrecy."

Again, in October 1940, when he returned to the United States on home leave, Kennedy knew enough of the details of FDR's secret collaboration with Britain "to endanger the President's reelection. Now Kennedy stood at the epicenter of the controversy," Beschloss asserts. "Would he aid Franklin Roosevelt by calming the widespread fears of Anglo-American collaboration or would he resign in protest, revealing what he knew, creating momentum that could possibly carry Wendell Willkie into the presidency?" Once more, Kennedy chose to stand by the president, making a nationwide radio address of support that astonished some of his friends.

Though Beschloss does not say so, Kennedy may have backed the president because he did not think his opposition could be decisive. If so, it was a shrewd decision. A close analysis of the election of 1940 suggests that even revelations of collaboration with Britain would not have turned the vote against FDR. Strongly favoring Britain in the conflict, convinced that the United States was eventually going to get into the war and that the experienced Roosevelt was a better man than Willkie to have in the White House during an international crisis, voters were less concerned with the peace issue than most believed at the time. It was "no time to train a new and inexperienced president," Kennedy effectively appealed to the public in his radio speech.

The most satisfying part of Beschloss's book is a closing section describing similarities and differences between Kennedy and FDR. Both men enjoyed power and devoted themselves to acquiring it. "Both were irrepressibly egotistical, loved the theatrical, the

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unorthodox, the outrageous." Both were also skilled actors who wore "ingenuous masks." Brilliant improvisers, artists at attracting and managing people, both achieved unusual things: Kennedy in business, Roosevelt in politics.

Their differences, however, were more striking than their similarities. For Kennedy, the self-made man, power represented "public recognition, acceptance, security, perhaps even invincibility." Never entirely secure, however great his financial holdings or however high his public station, Kennedy above all sought stability: in New Deal reform to preserve capitalism; in peace, even if it meant appeasing aggressors; in a powerful, centralized government; and ultimately, in political reaction. Unable to distinguish clearly between personal self-interest and the common good, Kennedy lacked a broad vision of public purpose. In the end, his dependence on presidential approval and his inability to commit himself to some larger vision of public affairs blocked his path to the greater political power he craved.

By contrast, Roosevelt, the patrician with a legacy of leisure and security, saw power as "the fulfillment of self rather than the preservation of self." Roosevelt's conception of the presidency was himself in office. Unlike Kennedy, he was happiest not with stasis but with change. Moreover, where Kennedy identified the national welfare with his family's welfare, Roosevelt thought of the White House as a family seat and himself as the father of a national family. An inspirational leader who consistently articulated a persuasive conception of American purpose, FDR achieved in public affairs what a Joseph Kennedy never could have done.

Juxtaposing the two men is a useful device for describing their personalities and careers. But it ascribes a degree of importance to Kennedy he does not deserve. Perhaps the moral of this book should be: the achievements of the sons shall not inflate the reputation of the father.

Robert Dallek

Robert Dallek is the author of *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford) which has won a 1980 Bancroft Prize.

Bias in Mental Testing
by Arthur Jensen
(Macmillan; $29.95)

Arthur Jensen's new book is a massive dose of first aid to the wounded reputation of intelligence testing. Several states recently have passed legislation limiting the use of aptitude tests. The Educational Testing Service, prestigious purveyor to the test industry, is under heavy consumer assault. With growing suspicion, professionals and the public are posing hard questions. Are intelligence tests fair? Are they useful? To whom are they useful? And what do they measure, anyway?

In a forced march through the theory of intelligence testing and test construction, Arthur Jensen drives his reader toward some answers. Since Jensen is on record as an intransigent apologist for standard techniques of measuring intelligence, there are no surprises. Intelligence is a genetically controlled trait; a glittering array of test instruments, quality-controlled by a vigilant industry, measures this trait fairly. But look under the statistical dazzle. Penetrate the meticulous descriptions of factor analysis, normal curves, and varima rotation, which sound like the routines of an Olympic skater. You will discover at base a profoundly articulated statement of conservative ideology.

Jensen's argument depends on the relentless splitting of psychology from its human subject matter. A clue to his method lies in the very structure of the book. He begins in cranky, contemptuous style, dismissing the work of his opponents. Jensen's vision of the enemies of testing is instructive. There is no mention, for example, of the serious critical work of Leon Kamin. Instead Jensen's composite portrait is made up of fuzzy-headed liberals and libertarians, ill-prepared minorities agitating for special privilege, propagandists (code word for Marxists), and the parents of children shoved into the classes for the "educable retarded." Malcontents, disappointed souls all. They are the last human voices we will hear. The rest of this bulky volume is a meditation on the purity and technique of test construction, a journey to the heart of psychometric theory.

Jensen's thesis is that the persistent differences in the IQ scores of black and white groups cannot be explained away as the outcome of unfair tests. He makes this case through a careful set of arguments which hinge on highly arcane definitions of bias and validity held tightly within the technical pur-

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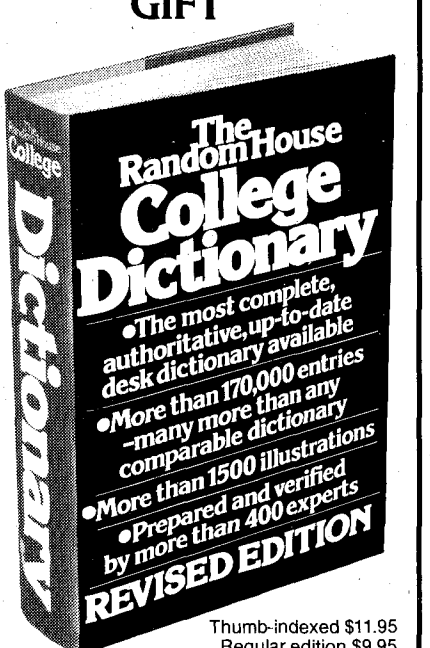
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view. "Bias refers to systematic errors in the predictive validity or the construct validity of test scores of individuals." Bias can be identified and cleansed through the purifying fires of statistics.

How is this managed? First let us decode the technical term "predictive validity." Simply put, this describes how accurately the score on some test predicts later performance on some relevant or related task. Will the high IQ high school senior ace his college boards and four years later make the dean's list at his prestigious university? Will the student landing on the lower ends of the normal distribution of IQ scores perform indifferently on college entrance exams and fail miserably at the second-rate school he manages to slink into? Since the answer to these questions is an unsurprising yes, Jensen assures us we may dismiss any charge of unfair bias. To learn this we have waded through many pages on the theory of test validity only to be told *sotto voce* that the whole argument collapses if the test and its predictor have similar degrees or sources of bias. If IQ scores, college boards, and college grades are all contaminated by discriminatory features, then "predictive validity," ironically, will serve to camouflage bias. Caught in the cycle of circular reasoning, Jensen's justification of testing collapses. Examining bias simply as a psychometric event—using test theory terms like "construct validity" and "predictive validity"—always will preclude a full understanding of how tests discriminate.

In answering the charge that IQ tests discriminate unfairly among different ethnic and cultural groups, Jensen has come upon an interesting finding. Black and white group differences are less dramatic for test items that are "culture loaded." Jensen then free associates from this unexpected finding. Items that are not culture loaded must measure deep innate aspects of thinking, he declares. These items still discriminate between blacks and whites. Thus the differences between black and white groups must have a biological base.

Demonstrating that cultural features do not discriminate against members of a minority culture requires a peculiar definition of cultural factors and the role of language. By culture, Jensen means school-related knowledge, specific facts, or specific vocabulary adhering to certain test items. His analysis relies on a most unworldly asocial treatment of those most social and worldly phenomena, language and culture. Language is not simply a list of vocabulary items. It is a structured system of communication and knowledge. In the assertion that cultural differences cannot matter when students take IQ tests, Jensen's preoccupation with test protocols shuts out the reality of culture; its richness, its pervasiveness. Obsessively preoccupied with matters of theory, Jensen gives short shrift to issues like test anxiety, motivation, and the conditions in which tests are given.

Environment? Jensen cannot imagine its impact on IQ scores. After all, as he approvingly notes: "The two groups [black and white] use a highly similar (if not identical) language, attend similar schools, are exposed to similar curricula, live in the same cities and buy the same commodities." The same schools? The same curricula? The same commodities?

BEACH GLASS

While you walk the water's edge,
turning over concepts
I can't envision, the honking buoy
serves notice that at any time
the wind may change,
the reef-bell clatters
its treble monotone, deaf as Cassandra
to any note but warning. The ocean,
cumbered by no business more urgent
than keeping open old accounts
that never balanced,
goes on shuffling its millennia
of quartz, granite and basalt.
It behaves
toward the permutations of novelty—
driftwood and shipwreck, last night's
beer cans, spilt oil, the coughed-up
residue of plastic—with random
impartiality, playing catch or tag
or touch-last like a terrier,
turning the same thing over and over,
over and over. For the ocean, nothing
is beneath consideration.
The houses
of so many mussels and periwinkles
have been abandoned here, it's hopeless
to know which to salvage. Instead
I keep a lookout for beach glass—
amber of Budweiser, chrysoprase
of Almadén and Gallo, lapis
by way of (no getting around it,
I'm afraid) Phillips'
Milk of Magnesia, with now and then a rare
translucent turquoise or blurred amethyst
of no known origin.
The process
goes on forever: they came from sand,
they go back to gravel,
along with the treasuries
of Murano, the buttressed
astonishments of Chartres,
which even now are readying
for being turned over and over as gravely
and gradually as an intellect
engaged in the hazardous
redefinition of structures
no one has yet looked at.

Amy Clampitt

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Where, one wants to shout, has this man been for the past two decades?

Specific cultural and class experience gets inside people's heads and hearts in myriad intricate ways, through language, life settings, the rhythms of work and leisure, and the process of self-consciousness. At this point what one can safely say is that, for minorities, an encounter with the instruments of the mainstream culture (of which an IQ test is but one example) is a complex process in which confidence and anxiety, rage and aspiration, all do battle. This book can tell us little about that struggle.

What can we say about the persistently lower scores of minorities? First, that poverty is debilitating. Poor nutrition, inadequate housing, futures with no economic prospects can blight development. What is so noticeable in Jensen's work is that group differences between white populations and dispossessed minorities are used to justify the status quo, not to criticize it. It cannot be stated too clearly or too often that acknowledged group differences in IQ scores are not *per se* arguments for heredity. Genetic claims are the politicized use of the empirical data.

Conventional tests of intelligence measure mastery over structured phenomena, particularly techniques of abstraction. There certainly are failures in the delivery of these skills to the schools of poor and minority children. This is quite different from any claim that poor children cannot think abstractly. There may well be cultural styles of thinking and speaking which are deeply at variance with the sorts of manipulations necessary for the Wechsler Intelligence Scale. When the Head Start program was developed, much attention was paid to the amorphous monosyllabic responses of the poor black children the language enrichment programs were designed to help. Consider the illuminating work of William Labov. When he created a comfortable situation for the black children he was listening to, he heard an imaginative outpouring of words, intricate stories, complex sentences, a rich stew of language and ideas. The question is not whether tinkering with specialized symbols is an inherited trait but why the communicative and cognitive skills developed in minority culture cannot be engaged in the projects controlled by the majority.

The most crucial question to ask about Arthur Jensen's book is not whether he succeeds in mounting a case for cultural evenhandedness, but why in 1980 we are being treated to another round of arguments for the heritability of intelligence. There is some new material here and the language is cleansed of the most obvious barnacles of racism. Still the basic position has not changed since the days when Louis Terman and Robert Yerkes sought to turn back the "feeble-minded" at Ellis Island. So why now? And why at such length?

The book serves at least three purposes. First, the credibility of the genetic position on group differences has been massively damaged. The discovery several years ago of fraudulent data laced through the work of Cyril Burt destroyed the academic respectability of the nativist position, that is, the position that human behavior is innately or biologically determined. Some old hand psychometricians have sought to wall off the damage by treating Burt's distortions and fabrications as the sad peculiarities of a sick old man. But the career and work of Cyril Burt make palpable the bending of facts and empirical work in the service of ideology. Moreover, Jensen's earlier work relied heavily on Burt's data on monozygotic twins reared apart. Clearly some hard work of reconstruction was required. Jensen's energetic defense of testing rehabilitates the genetic position. He spotlights the patron saints of measurement—Galton, Binet, and Spearman. Burt is moved decorously offstage.

Second, with this publication, Jensen rides the wave of sociobiology. Current fashion in social science, and nowhere more strenuously than psychology, is to represent the social as the biological. And intellectual arguments that rationalize unequal access to resources as biologically determined clearly are compatible with the current economic period of diminishing social services.

Finally, this book may not be a defense of tests at all. The economist Samuel Bowles argues that IQ is not the crucial predictor of professional advancement. Class position and status, independent of IQ, are better predictors. The book is not really about testing. Nestled in Jensen's impeccable account of the theory of the measurement of intelligence are some important social assumptions. Hierarchy is a natural condition of social and professional life. The small number of high-status, high-paying jobs have been designed providentially for the small number of individuals biologically equipped to fill them. The book gives legitimacy and the blessing of scientific method to selective placement and an ascending pyramid of jobs and training.

Jensen's politics becomes clearer when we examine the pragmatic solutions he poses at the book's conclusion. Critical of the wholesale use of tests in the elementary school, he considers the practice of streaming children into "special education" classes no more than the matching of educational opportunity with natural ability. IQ testing is part of the apparatus that sustains the sordid fiction of such labels as "educable retarded," "minimal brain dysfunction," or "special education." Funding policies in many school districts, a proliferation of testing devices, and exhausted, undertrained school staff have resulted in the dramatic increase in essentially custodial classrooms for "special education." This, the reality of testing, not its theory, has had devastating effects on many poor children.

Testing for professional placement is justified on several grounds. It is economical to fill professional schools with people we expect to do well there. Remember only that this "economy" is paid for through the tax dollars of many lower-income families whose children have little chance of entry. Second, it is suggested that IQ tests are the best

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device for the advancement of bright but poor children. Given Jensen's demonstrated knowledge of the low probability of any access to limited professional training, this argument must be dismissed as bad faith. Equally so is the patronizing suggestion that IQ tests, in screening out the unfit, save many poor people the shame and anxiety of later failure.

Bias in Mental Testing strikes up the old tune of social Darwinism. There is order and hierarchy in nature. "Intelligence is not the invention of the establishment as critics claim." It is an ability "continuous with broader biological factors reflected in individual differences within other primate species." The book is filled with physical metaphors and biological examples. IQ is like a fever, IQ tests like the thermometer. Intelligence is a trait like height or running. As the music swells, Jensen offers us an evolutionary perspective. All living creatures march to their appointed space under the sign of the bell-shaped curve. It is hard to believe that we still are being asked to notice the intellectual similarities among lower primates, the retarded, and small normal children.

Anyone who doubts that we are now in a renaissance of nativism should reflect on the recent attempts to market the sperm of high-IQ males. The spectacle of elderly Nobel prizewinners, bearing vials of precious body fluids, seems like the comic invention of Molière. But the affinity of biological theories of human behavior and eugenics is no laughing matter.

Adrienne Harris

Adrienne Harris is associate professor of psychology at Rutgers University.

Freddy's Book
by John Gardner
(Knopf; $10)

Freddy's Book is profoundly dissatisfying. I came to it as a great admirer of John Gardner's previous fiction—*Grendel*, *October Light*, the tales in *The King's Indian*—but as a disparager of his unscholarly Chaucer biography and his self-righteous critical tract, *On Moral Fiction*. In his fiction Gardner has been inventive, witty, and entertaining. In his criticism he has been plagiaristic, self-serving, and sanctimonious. *Freddy's Book*, a novel, shares more qualities with Gardner's criticism than with his fiction.

The book is divided into two parts (there are also illustrations, which I found beside the point). The first 60 pages serve to get a Mr. Winesap from a lecture hall in Madison, Wisconsin (his lecture is entitled "The Psycho-politics of the Late Welsh Fairytale: Fee, Fie, Foe—Revolution!") to the gothic house of a Professor Agaard, whose son Freddy is a "monster" (actually, a giant). The rest of the book, entitled "King Gustav and the Devil," is a long story Freddy has written which he gives Winesap to read. This is the novel-within-a-novel convention, but with no structural interest. Unlike in *October Light*, where the actual story is continually interrupted by extracts from a book a woman locked in her bedroom is reading, there's no interplay in *Freddy's Book* between the two parts—or rather, no interplay that seems worth the trouble to examine. It's a 60-page lead-in to an independent story, and neither part offers much in the way of reward.

In *On Moral Fiction* Gardner claims that "Art . . . discovers *by its process* what it can say" (emphasis his). But in the first part of *Freddy's Book* there is no discovery by process. Characters are always where Gardner needs them: Winesap goes to Agaard's house for no really interesting reason; heavy snow confines him there for the night, conveniently, so he can be goaded into reading demented Freddy's little book. The very language, which is ordinarily where Gardner is at his best, reeks of lack of attention to the details of the process he claims is essential to good fiction. "His voice cracked out like a trumpet, belligerent and fearful." This is writing off the tip of Gardner's pen: the basic simile is old hat, and the adjectives, confusingly, are antonyms. "Outside the room, wind was howling through the pines" can only be described as a cliché. In the sentence "The gesture embarrassed me as soon as I saw it for what it was, but I had no power to take it back," the phrase "I had no power" is weak, even if Gardner intended it as part of an attempt to create an air of gothic spookiness around Agaard and his son. In the first part of the book the plot is dogged, the atmosphere is hokey, the language isn't especially pleasurable, and the characters are easily forgotten. The whole thing is merely slick, and falls away like a spent rocket booster once we arrive at "King Gustav and the Devil."

And the arrival is no cause for celebration. "King Gustav and the Devil" is a confusing tale involving Gustav Vasa, who, with the help of the knight Lars-Goren and the Devil, liberates 16th-century Sweden from the yoke of Kristian II of Denmark; Bishop Brask, who teams up with Lars-Goren on a subsequent mission to seek out and destroy the Devil; Lars-Goren, whom Gustav ends up turning against; and the Devil himself, who plays many parts. The plots and counterplots come off as overly manipulated instead of intriguing. The quasi-historical characters, whom I found it difficult to care about, make a lot of pronouncements about God, evil, and language. Some of the pronouncements ring hollow at their core:

> I remember when I imagined some connection existed between rhetoric and the world. I remember the feeling. Very pleasant, like the feeling of union between man and a woman when they couple. A *curious* illusion, when you stop to give it thought. I doubt that one would have quite that feeling if one did it with a sheep or, say, a unicorn. But one never stops to think about such things when one's young.

Some are merely banal:

> Imagine a world without death, without serious pain. A world of mild toothaches. Who'd need a castle in a world like that? Or a church or a museum—even a family? What's good, with no evil to judge it against?

In *On Moral Fiction* Gardner rails against Saul Bellow for being an "essayist disguised as a writer of fiction," for using his characters as personal mouthpieces. He cites as proof Bellow's infrequent use of more than one major character in a book, and claims that "the interaction of characters is everything." But it seems to me that the meaning of *Freddy's Book*, if there is any, lies more in its characters' exhortations than in their interaction.

In *On Moral Fiction* Gardner expresses his concern about art and morality, and calls for more "seriousness" from

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writers of fiction. In *Freddy's Book* his concern has crystallized into zealousness; it's fiction too much in the service of ideas. Gardner is an extremely talented storyteller. It would be a shame if his new "seriousness" led him to write sermons instead of carefully crafted stories.

Marc Granetz

Marc Granetz is editor at New Republic Books.

Brief Reviews

Fatal Demonstrations by Elizabeth Moulton

(Harper & Row; $9.95)

"How had David flattened Curtis?" Isobel Storer wonders as David Harris reads aloud his dry, academic biography of Curtis Trevelyan. But Isobel knows very well why the portrait is lifeless: before she gave David the papers of the radical poet, writer, and activist for Sacco and Vanzetti, she had expunged every reference to the tumultuous affair she had had with Curt.

Robin, Isobel's granddaughter, led David to Curt's papers. Since Robin and David broke up, Isobel is stuck with regular visits from the overly polite young man. As David reads his pedantic chapters, she relives her affair, while David and Robin move tentatively toward reconciliation.

David's dull biography readings—the book within the book—provide a foil to Isobel's glowing memories of Curt's fiery nature. Curt is an alluring character: he is an angry rebel who scorns society and gives up fortune and life for his ideals. He expects no less of Isobel. She is torn between love and duty: a tomboy at heart, she is bound by the rigid high Boston society in which she moves; bound most of all by her code of honor, which includes never admitting a hurt, never refusing a dare, and never abandoning those who depend on her—her husband and son.

Isobel's and Curt's fierce and bitter affair, considered illicit in the 1920s and 1930s, contrasts ironically with David's and Robin's socially acceptable but nevertheless inhibited rapprochement in the liberated 1970s. Elizabeth Moulton does not imagine the modern couple as vividly as the earlier one; David and Robin are seen from the outside, types rather than individuals. At times, Robin seems scarcely more than the device that sets in motion the book within the book. And David's character is too thinly developed during the course of the novel to support his momentous change at the end when he realizes that what is missing from Curt's life as he has written it is what is missing from his own.

Moulton extends the contrast by setting both romances against a backdrop of political activism. Curt's selfless devotion to Sacco and Vanzetti and the Spanish Civil War certainly makes the Harvard anti-war demonstrations David and Robin participate in (or, more often, avoid) look lukewarm—so much so that the contrast ends up as merely a peripheral contrivance. Moulton even arranges the novel's climax to coincide with the Kent State shootings—a heavy-handed and gratuitous touch. But her ambitious attempt at a complex structure and her successful presentation of Isobel and Curt make this a promising first novel.

Lisa Derman

My Uncle Oswald by Roald Dahl

(Knopf; $8.95)

We know that God has a sense of humor, said de Maupassant, from the manner he has chosen for us to reproduce ourselves. This view of copulation as undignified and absurd is the theme of Roald Dahl's novel, a short, snappy burlesque of sex novels and sex.

Shortly after World War I, Oswald Cornelius learns that a scientist friend of his has discovered how to freeze sperm. Always on the lookout for a chance to make a fast million, Oswald proposes transferring his friend's operations from Friesian bulls to pedigreed humans. He will obtain the vital juices of famous and distinguished men, for later sale to wealthy ladies who want to bear a genius's child. There is, of course, one snag in this enterprise; as his friend points out, "You can't go crashing into Buckingham Palace and start asking His Majesty the King if he would be good enough to provide you with an ejaculation of semen." Oswald gets round this difficulty with the aid of two fortuitous discoveries of his own: the world's most powerful aphrodisiac and a sensationally beautiful girl.

So Oswald and his helpmeet, Yasmin, make up a list (Einstein, Proust, Puccini, and 10 kings), inject some chocolates with Sudanese fly, construct a portable sperm-freezing kit, and set out on their grand tour. Though there is, naturally, a good deal of messing around, Dahl's novel is not in the least erotic, although—or, rather, because—it is extravagantly funny. Men won't iden-

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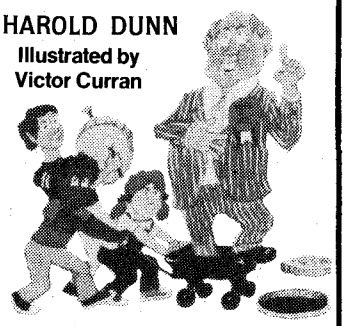

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tify with the sperm-hunters' quarries, who are put (sometimes literally) into ludicrous positions; and while women may happily identify with Yasmin, the vicarious pleasure for them is not in sex, but revenge. For, while Yasmin, like Oswald, is in it for the money, she also sees her work as a great opportunity to give some high-and-mighty intellectuals their come-uppance. She mischievously tells Dr. Freud, minutes before her aphrodisiac bonbon is scheduled to explode in his system, that she has this terrible problem, men keep raping her all the time ("Dear lady, this is a very common fantasy among certain types of hysterical vimmen"); she temporarily makes George Bernard Shaw forget that women are predatory creatures ("*Now* I see what Mrs. Pat Campbell was on about!"); she tricks Marcel Proust into his only heterosexual experience. As you can see, the joke is not in the intrinsic brilliance of Dahl's dialogue, but in our matching his premise with our knowledge of his famous victims. When—sometimes in mid-sentence—intellect is overtaken by embarrassing necessity, we have the schoolboy pleasure of seeing great men, in Ben Heck's phrase, caught with their polemics down. This formula reaches its most magnificent simplicity in Yasmin's advice to a genius who tries to figure out what is happening to him: "Mr. Einstein, relax."

Dahl's style is a sort of comic-strip version of Frank Harris. Oswald and Yasmin speak in modern, staccato rhythms, yet much of their vocabulary echoes Victorian porn—facetious names for the penis, "wench" used as a noun and verb. "Oh," cries a French wench on whom Oswald has used his mighty engine, "I feel like my boiler has exploded!" Sometimes—as in a rather brutal representation of sex as medieval combat—Dahl's imagery is a bit sickening; but that, I suppose, is part of his merry contempt for polite entertainment. He has written a very impudent, jolly farce; I just hope other readers are able to suspend disbelief at the rather far-fetched idea of a geniuses' sperm bank.

Rhoda Koenig

Rhoda Koenig is the literary editor of *New York* magazine.

Coming:

John Canaday on

the Luminist Movement.

Heyday: An Autobiography by Dore Schary

(Little, Brown; $14.95)

As the executive in charge of production at two major Hollywood studios in the 1940s and 1950s, and as a wide-eyed young screenwriter and B-picture producer for 10 years before that, Dore Schary was a remarkably well-situated observer of Hollywood's heyday, up until it was done in by TV.

Star-struck aficionados of Hollywood biographies will find some juicy anecdotes here, like Mario Lanza's sad bouts with fat and paranoia, but not much that hasn't already been well rehearsed elsewhere. The real interest of Schary's book lies in the portrayal of that world seldom entered by the "fanzines," the world of the Hollywood executive suite. What emerges are sharp, surprisingly unbitter portraits of redoubtable moguls like L.B. Mayer, the legendarily vulgar head of MGM, Howard Hughes, David O. Selznick, and Nicholas Schenck, head of MGM's parent company. It was Schenck who finally gave Schary the ax because he was an "egghead."

Schary's unpardonable gaffe, it seems, was to support Adlai Stevenson in his two presidential campaigns and to refuse to participate in the witch hunt for Communists and the blacklist that followed. Summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee, he chose to show his defiance of it in less uproarious and more subtle ways than did the Hollywood Ten. But his refusal to force employees to sign loyalty oaths and his statement to the HUAC that he would continue to hire *all* talented screenwriters, even Communists, drew intense fire from the rabid right. When he joined MGM in 1948, Hedda Hopper sneeringly suggested that the studio's name be changed to Metro-Goldwyn-Moscow.

Schary's book is also useful for the quiet case it makes for the importance of the producer in the overall aesthetic quality of the finished film. It *is* a collaborative art, after all, and Schary is right to insist that too much attention is now being given to the director as *auteur*. Schary portrays most of the directors he employed as the expendable assembly-line workers they often were.

Schary's autobiography is least successful as a venture in self-understanding. From the very beginning of his career he hustles, struggles, survives his way to the top, but he never once reflects on the sources of the tenacity that kept him going. The few ideas that do surface are more often than not platitudes, and in this failing he reflects the product of his years at MGM—safe films, above all, rarely anything that would cause a tremor of doubt in the spectator's mind.

Still, even though there's little here in the way of analysis, and not much new information on those most visible manifestations of Hollywood's glamour, its stars, Schary's version of Hollywood politics and his honest look at the corporate shenanigans of the businessmen behind the art are well worth the price of admission.

Peter Brunette

Peter Brunette teaches English and film at George Mason University. He is currently writing a book on Roberto Rossellini.

Correspondence, *from page 7*

In the early period of American history, presidential nominees were chosen by a secret caucus of each party's congressional delegation. The Jacksonian era brought in the convention method, which was perceived as more democratic. Now that the latter has failed, though, we should reconsider the merits of nomination by caucuses, with appropriate safeguards built into the system to allay the suspicions that originally brought it down.

I would propose that each party choose its presidential and vice-presidential nominees by a caucus of its elected federal and state officials. A weighted voting scheme could be devised that would give voting power corresponding to office and size of state. All proceedings of each caucus would be televised and all votes on the public record, so the participants would be accountable to their constituents for their votes. The people could participate in the process by writing to their representatives to support particular candidates. In the election, the people would retain the ultimate choice between the Democratic and Republican tickets. Caucuses could be held in August and followed by a two-month campaign.

The caucus system would bring our government closer to a parliamentary model, in which the head of government is chosen by the elected members of his

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party. This would improve party discipline; an elected president would be more likely to get his program accomplished if he were nominated by the people responsible for enacting it. Finally, caucuses would reduce the length of the campaign to a reasonable interval and save everyone the expenses of the modern two-year campaign.

The 19th-century caucuses produced presidents Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. Why not the best?

Milton P. Eisner
Richmond, Virginia

Lamentation

To the editors:

Jeremiah would have lamented—he might even have wept by the rivers of Babylon—if he could have witnessed such ignorance of the Bible as M.P. displays (Washington Diarist, *TNR*, March 29): "Let my right hand wither if I foget Jersalem" is from Psalm 137, not *Lamentations*. It is appropriate that this verse is mentioned, however; long and careful meditation upon the conclusion of this psalm should help M.P. overcome his squeamishness and put him in the right spirit to vote for conservative Republicans.

Charles Brown
Durham, North Carolina

Precocious poet

To the editors:

You are ever to be commended for publishing such fine contemporary poetry, such as that of Howard Nemerov (*TNR*, March 22). The title of that poem, however, ("The Author to his Body on Their Fifteenth Birthday, 29 ii 80") would have led me to the conclusion that Mr. Nemerov was an exceptional prodigy, had I not an acquaintance with his work for nearly a quarter of a century. I rejoice in the apparently rejuvenative nature of a life in poetry.

Yvonne Hawley
Madison, Wisconsin

Note: As the title of the poem indicates, Howard Nemerov was born on leap-year day.

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Washington Diarist

Bitter Pills

Way back in the fall of 1979, when it looked like Teddy Kennedy was hot presidential property, I told a Kennedy loyalist friend of mine that I'd start taking Teddy seriously when he started pulling the black vote. This was when good Kennedy people were sure Chappaquiddick had blown over and had found other, equally convincing ways of assuring themselves that a new Camelot was around the corner. But blacks didn't seem to be buying Teddy's version. Even when Carter fired Andy Young for his allegedly unauthorized meeting with a representative of the PLO, black leaders behind the president—particularly the mayors—made no real move to jump ship. What's more, Kennedy had hurt himself in the eyes of many blacks when he failed to support liberal Massachusetts Republican Ed Brooke's reelection in 1978, thus depriving the Senate of a seasoned, influential legislator and American blacks of a potent symbol of racial equality. My question was this: how could Kennedy expect to put together a credible liberal coalition without blacks?

Kennedy's failure to show up at the February gathering of black leaders in Richmond further contributed to a suspicion among blacks "that Kennedy enjoys working for them, but not with them," as Tony Hill, a reporter for Boston's WGBH-TV, observed. Kennedy gaffes and miscalculations continued to pile up on the campaign trail. In a speech before Chicago blacks, for example, he recalled Rosa Parks's refusal "to go to the back of the bus in Birmingham, Alabama." Unfortunately for Kennedy, Parks's famous act of civil disobedience took place in Montgomery. Carter swept the uncontested black vote in the South. In Illinois, Chicago blacks wouldn't give Kennedy the time of day. Even on his home turf in Boston, where he traditionally has been able to count on 80 percent of the black vote, Kennedy only got 53 percent against Carter in the black community. Then came New York. New York blacks went solidly for Kennedy, and for a moment it looked like some kind of recognizable coalition might be in the making after all, though the Wisconsin results a week later dampened that notion.

Pennsylvania is next. Kennedy's ability to attract black voters certainly hasn't been discredited conclusively, but the odds are it will be. The reasons have less to do with Kennedy's own shortcomings—never an insignificant factor—than with the diffuse and fragmented state of black politics in 1980. At least this was the message to be gleaned from Bill Moyers's special on the Richmond black conference, aired on Washington's PBS affiliate recently. With black unemployment currently at 23.1 percent and teenage unemployment at an epidemic 60 percent (according to Urban League figures), there can be no doubt that the picture for most blacks is downright bleak. Against that backdrop, New York's black vote against Jimmy Carter's toothless economic policies wasn't really surprising. But blacks are hardly powerless anymore. As Moyers pointed out, there were fewer than 1500 elected black officials in 1970; by the end of this year there may be 5000. Yet the political success of a few, if you listen between the lines of Moyers's report, has had the effect of alienating the many—particularly in the absence of a strong single leader. There is talk of the black voters' lack of sophistication from such unlikely prophets as Dick Gregory, who argues that blacks should remain uncommitted until leaders like Jesse Jackson and Vernon Jordan and Andy Young tell them how to vote. Gregory worries that blacks won't have the sense *not* to vote. But the real problem is that the key issues for blacks in 1980—the economy, government spending—aren't just black issues. "The problem of inflation would exist if everybody were white," says Young. "There are no longer any lunch counters to sit into," says Washington mayor Marion Barry. The overriding concern of the black leadership, Barry says, is "how we all get an equitable piece of the economic pie." On the face of it, this is nothing new, even if you ignore the unintended implication that the civil rights struggle *per se* is over. But then listen to Mayor Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana: "we as black people have suffered uniquely. . . . We are owed not just equality, not just fair treatment, we are owed reparations for all those years. . . ." Something is wrong here, and it is foreshadowed earlier in the show when Jessie Ratley, speaking obviously in an economic context, says, "No one will give us anything. We're going to have to take it." This kind of rhetoric was the stock in trade of the civil rights movement; yet it rings hollow, even potentially dangerous, in a time of economic scarcity for all low- and middle-income people. This rhetorical lag may be an attempt to communicate with the black electorate in the traditional pitch; it may also be an unwillingness to acknowledge that the issue can no longer be pitched as a solely black problem. Many blacks were uncomfortable when Iran pointedly released some black hostages in January; as Kenneth Clark recently wrote in the *New York Times*, "the conflict between being an American and being a black American was intensified." Black voters, thus attuned in 1980, are not likely to buy pie-in-the-sky rhetoric anymore, despite the habits of their leaders. Surely they will realize, even if their leaders don't, the political backlash such talk inevitably will provoke. It may have begun already. One Carter judicial appointee to the federal bench in Alabama, legendary Tuskegee lawyer Fred D. Gray, whose record of stunning successes in civil rights litigation is as long as your arm, has been declared unfit for the federal bench by the American Bar Association on charges of fee-splitting, client solicitation, and involvement in an Alabama land swindle. Did Gray somehow believe he was "owed reparations?" Rightly or wrongly, that is a presumption too many people will make.

TRB, dapper and energetic as ever, strolled in for his occasional Wednesday morning visit recently and warned us straight out that everything we write against Jimmy Carter from here on out would play into Ronald Reagan's hands. This declaration, to tell the truth, caused us to shift a little uncomfortably in our seats. This editor was hard pressed not to remember the treatment former governor Michael Dukakis received at the hands of Massachusetts liberals in 1978. Because the Duke had slashed the state's welfare program during his first year in office, liberals showed up (or stayed away) on primary day to give him a sharp right to the chops. "We didn't expect to knock him out," muttered one sorry mugger after it was all over. When a bloodied Dukakis finally picked himself up off the pavement, Neanderthal Ed King was governor of Massachusetts. I, for one, squirmed a little more listening to Coleman Young on the Moyers special as he endorsed Carter. The crowd booed him roundly. "After you get through booing," Young replied steadily, "who the hell are you for?"

R. H.

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